A WONDERFUL STORY FOR BOYS WILL BEGIN IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE

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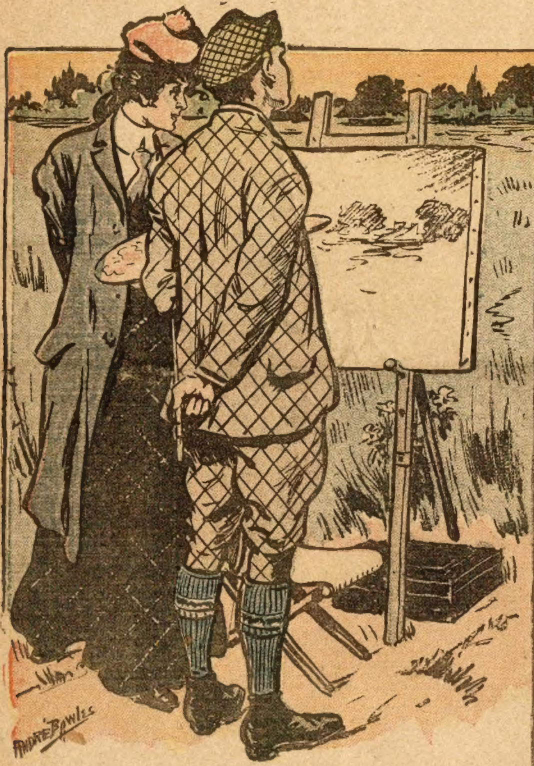
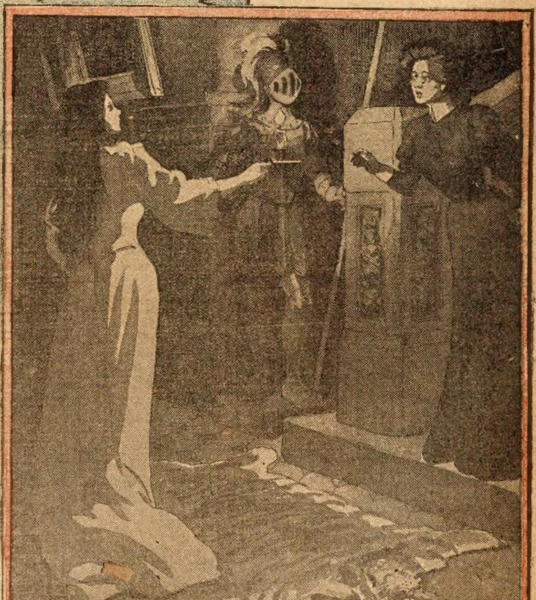
A FATAL FLIRTATION

BY GRANVILLE OSBORNE





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CHAPTER I.

"Emmie, what is it like to be in love?" The girl thus strangely addressed turned round with a start.

"Why do you ask me that, Jennet?" she said gently. "You should not be thinking about such things—yet."

"Pooh!" retorted Jennet. "You forget that I shall be seventeen tomorrow. Lots of girls have lovers before they are my age—but that's not being in love! They are too silly for anything. You are in love, Em—I know you are!"

"Jennet! How dare you?"

Emmie's slender figure assumed a sudden dignity as she turned, crimson-cheeked, to defend her precious secret from the tall schoolgirl who sat swinging her long legs on the edge of the bed, in a little attic bedroom which the sisters shared.

"Don't be cross," said Jennet coolly. "Why can't you tell me all about it, Em? You would feel ever so much happier."

"Tell you all about it?" repeated Emmeline to herself, with an involuntary shudder. Then she recovered herself. "How silly you are, child! Who has been putting such ideas into your head?"

"You yourself," returned the other unabashed. "You are quite changed nowadays, Em—I have noticed it ever since I came home. You don't eat or sleep properly; you have grown quite thin, and you are always going off for long walks by yourself——"

Emmeline turned white, but Jennet went on, unconscious of the depth of the emotion she was exciting.

"I was awake last night, and I heard you crying. Now, Em, what is there to cry about? He has always worshiped the ground you tread on, and I am certain that he would propose tomorrow if you gave him the least encouragement——"

"He!" panted Emmeline. "Jennet, how do you know? What do you mean?"

"I know because I have eyes in my head," replied the younger girl, half laughing, half angry. "Oh, you ridiculous little goose! Why, half the parish knows that Mr. Marsh—the Reverend Theo Marsh—is head over ears in love with his vicar's eldest niece. Even Uncle David himself has an inkling of the state of affairs."

"Mr. Marsh!" whispered Emmeline. She struggled for an instant and then, bursting into hysterical laughter, she flung herself down on the bed and hid her fair head in the pillows.

Jennet looked at her sister with grave disapproval.

"Stop that, Emmeline!" she said at last. "It is Mr. Marsh, isn't it? But of course it must be, for there is nobody else."

"What a goose I am!" gasped Emmeline at last. "Now, look here, Jennet—you have discovered my secret, and made me betray myself. But if, as you insist, you are really old enough to understand such things, you will never speak to me in this way until I give you leave."

Jennet looked impressed. As a rule hers was by far the stronger will of the two, and it was something quite new to hear the gentle Emmeline issuing her commands.

"All right," she said. "But hadn't you better wash your face? The tea-bell will ring in a minute."

Emmeline sighed and obeyed. In a few minutes all trace of her agitation had disappeared, and she seemed almost herself again when the two girls entered the dining room where their uncle awaited them.

The Reverend David Millard was a white-haired, gentle old man, whose gradually failing eyesight rendered the services of a curate absolutely necessary, although as a matter of fact the tiny moorland parish of Cradley was well within one man's powers of working. But Mr. Millard was a great student, and something of a recluse, and the parish might have suffered had it not been for Emmeline and Mr. Marsh. Jennet, who had only just left boarding school, had undertaken to read to her uncle, and to copy out his notes on the book he was writing, so that both girls led busy, well-occupied lives, and scarcely realized the dullness and monotony of their surroundings.

"My dears," said the vicar, "you are late; the tea has been standing for nearly five minutes."

Emmeline stationed herself behind the tea tray and Jennet began to cut slices of the home-made bread.

"Here comes Mr. Marsh," she observed, carefully refraining from looking at her sister, as the curate entered. He was a tall, fair young man who stooped and wore spectacles. He was very kind-hearted, extremely shy, and—as Jennet had remarked—head over ears in love with his vicar's eldest niece, a fact patent to the village at large, and to every one save the absent-minded vicar himself, who had never realized that Emmeline was no longer a child.

"Come in, Marsh, you are just in time for tea," said Mr. Millard hospitably. "Jennet, my love, another cup!"

The vicarage menage only boasted of one servant, so Jennet herself went to get the cup and plate, and when she returned the curate was explaining the errand upon which he had come.

"Alice Scott is much worse, sir," he said. "I had a message this afternoon, begging me to go up to the farm as soon as possible. I do not think she can outlive the night. She—she is most anxious to see Miss Emmeline once more before she dies."

"I will go up at once," said Emmeline promptly. Alice Scott, an old Sunday school pupil of hers, was dying of consumption, and, though the house was nearly two miles away, across the moors, Emmeline had been indefatigable in her visits to the poor girl.

"I'll come with you!" cried Jennet.

But Mr. Millard protested. He had some important writing for Jennet to finish, and the curate, who would willingly have supplied her place, was detained by an evening service in the little mission church some miles in the opposite direction. Jennet yielded with good grace, and Emmeline, who had taken no part in the discussion, stifled a sigh of relief as she left the room to put on her hat. She did not want her sister's company that evening, and she had been wondering if it would be possible to slip out-of-doors by herself. The fates had proved propitious, and were sending her alone in the direction she wished to go.

The sun that had shone with fiery enthusiasm throughout the long June day was eclipsed that evening by heavy, white-tipped clouds, creeping slowly up from the west, and a hush lay over the weary parched earth, a silence broken only by an occasional moan of distant thunder.

"There is going to be a storm," said Jennet, laying down her pen with a sigh of relief. "You don't want me any longer, do you, uncle? I must hurry to meet Emmie—she is so afraid of thunder, and cannot bear to be out in it alone."

The wide spreading moors looked weird and unfamiliar under the lurid sky. Jennet was not susceptible to weather as a rule, but when she had walked for a mile and a half on the rough beaten cart-track without meeting any one, she became conscious of a sudden craving for companionship. The storm was sweeping up with portentous rapidity. How frightened Emmeline would be!

"Perhaps she has stayed at the farm,' thought Jennet, pulling her tam-o'-shanter down over her eyes as the first flash of lightning rent the clouds, followed immediately by a long crackling peal of thunder. The storm was near enough to be decidedly unpleasant in such an exposed spot, and it was with a sensation of intense relief that Jennet at last beheld the little gray farmhouse, with its cluster of farm buildings and its scanty acres reclaimed from the heather-covered moors. She did not doubt for an instant that she would find her sister still there.

Jennet was almost within reach of her goal, struggling on with bowed head, half deafened by the thunder and dazzled by the constant lightning, when she came into sudden contact with an umbrella carried by a young man wearing a long, light mackintosh. He was striding along in the direction of the village, and brushed past her with muttered apology before she could obtain a glimpse of his face.

A stranger on the moors, and in such weather, was an unusual sight. Jennet, looking round after him, saw that he was carrying a bag, and she wondered at the slight discourtesy he had shown to her, and at his impudence in unfurling an umbrella. But she was too exhausted and breathless to waste many thoughts upon him.

The kitchen door of the farmhouse stood wide open, but the kitchen was empty, and the girl stood drying her skirts at the fire, and listening to the subdued steps and voices in the sick-room overhead. It was her first visit to the farm since her return from school, and she did not feel sufficiently familiar with her surroundings to make her way up to the dying girl's room unasked.. At last the wooden stairs creaked under Mrs. Scott's ponderous footsteps, and the good woman herself appeared.

"Sakes alive!" she exclaimed, peering at her visitor through the gloom of the premature twilight. "Why, whatever—it's Miss Jennet, baint it? Dear me, lass, but you have grown gradely an' bonny i' the face. Have you been waiting long, my dearie? Alice had one of her bad fainting attacks and I couldn't leave her."

"I suppose Emmeline is with her now?" asked Jennet. "I'm so glad she stayed, Mrs. Scott. It is a terrible storm, isn't it?" Even as she spoke part of her speech was lost in a crash of thunder.

Mrs. Scott put her apron to her eyes. "Eh, it's fair dauntin'!" she cried. "I'm worrittin' a bit over my lodger, a young gentleman as has been here sketchin' for the last week, and left just before the storm broke. He had sent on his things and was walking over the moors to Havent Station, and I'm thinkin' may have got muddled i' the storm and lost his way."

"Did he wear a long mackintosh, and was he carrying a bag?" asked the girl. "Why, I met him!"

"Yes, that was him, missy, but what could ha' been doin' there, after starting nigh on an hour and a half ago, fair beats me," returned Mrs. Scott. "But there, I've no thoughts to spare from that poor lamb upstairs! I hadn't even th' sense to bid Miss Emmeline bide a bit longer, seeing as th' storm was backin' up when she left th' house."

"But Em is here—upstairs with Alice?" asked Jennet quickly.

"Eh, no, missy!" replied the good woman, shaking her head. "Miss Emmeline paid only a short visit this time. She said she must be getting home, and I mind me now that th' clock struck half-past six as she went down th' stairs. Alice was put about, but we couldn't keep her."

"Half-past six!" repeated Jennet. "And it is nearly half-past seven now. She ought to be home by this time—and yet how could we have missed each other?"

Mrs. Scott shook her head.

"I'm fair muddled," she admitted. "What wi' one thing and another I don't know which way to look!"

"But Emmeline—my sister!" Jennet interrupted.

"Nay, how can I tell?" answered Mrs. Scott. "She come in looking for all th' world like a little white ghosty, whiles I was takin' Mr. Donald's receipted bill into th' parlor, and she went straight up to Alice's room. I followed her there as soon as I'd seen th' last of Mr. Donald, but she seemed restless-like, and Alice——"

"I can't understand it, but I mustn't stay talking longer," cried the girl hastily, and, without heeding the shrill protest that followed her, she ran out into the storm again.

The worst was over. The thunder still rumbled in the distance, but the lightning had ceased, and the rain fell with a steady persistency that bade fair to last all night.

Jennet walked as quickly as she could over the miles of wet, unprotected moorland that lay between herself and home. She wondered again and again how she could have missed seeing her sister, for the flat expanse of sodden heather and bracken under the dull gray sky was unbroken save by great moss-covered stone boulders, and here and there the shaft of a disused pit. But nowhere could Jennet obtain a glimpse of Emmeline's slender figure, and her vague uneasiness became panic-stricken dismay when she reached the vicarage to find her sister had not returned.

"She will be here directly," declared her uncle, alarmed by the girl's unwonted agitation. But the long minutes glided into half an hour—the half hour became an hour—and the stormy twilight was fast passing into night, but still there was no sign of Emmeline.

"I cannot bear it any longer!" cried Jennet suddenly, as the clock struck half-past eight. "Something terrible has happened. Even you are frightened now, Uncle David! She may have been lying somewhere near the very path along which I passed, with a sprained foot. Oh, nothing more, nothing worse than that! But I must go to her—I must go——"

She rushed out of the house, and, within a few minutes of her departure, the vicar, roused at last, was alarming the village, and instituting a regular search for the missing girl.

Jennet scarcely knew where she went. She was out on the moors again, rushing bareheaded through the darkness, and calling wildly to her sister.

"Emmeline! Em, darling! Don't be frightened—it is only I!"

She left the track and was soon pushing her way through damp masses of bracken and heather, stumbling and bruising herself against great upstanding boulders, but never once stopping her piteous cry. And yet, as she realized afterwards, she did not expect to receive an answer; some instinct seemed to tell her that pretty, gentle Emmeline's voice was silenced forever on earth.

"Hark! What was that?"

Jennet, pushing the floating strands of wet hair from her ghostly face, paused in her reckless haste. She had heard a faint broken cry—the merest whispering moan—proceeding, to all appearance, from the ground beneath her feet.

"Jennet! Oh, Jennet!"

Could it be Emmeline speaking?

"Jennet! Help!"

The young girl hesitated no longer. She could see now that she was standing on the very brink of one of the old pit shafts, for the wall that had guarded it had been suffered to crumble away, and it had now become a death-trap for the unwary pedestrian. She knew that Emmeline was speaking out of its grim depths, that her frail little body lay, crushed and bleeding, in the awful darkness—and, falling on her knees, she dragged herself close to the edge.

"Courage, darling! I have found you—I am coming to you!"

Once more the faint hollow cry came up from the unseen depths, and then Jennet lingered no longer. She swung herself over the brink and began to slip, feet downwards, clutching desperately at the crumbling sides, and fighting death, inch by inch, in an unequal contest on his own ground. The grim monarch must have conquered had not the shaft been partly filled with earth and stones, upon the sharp edges of which poor Emmeline had found her death-bed. She did not hear her sister's quick panting breath, nor the inevitable slip and fall, when Jennet, who fully believed that her last hour had come, found herself lying, half stunned and wholly bewildered, with her arm thrown over Emmeline's body.

Far above, through the mouth of the shaft overhead, she could see the lightning flickering over the inky sky; the stones and gravel that she had brought down with her were still falling, and some one was sighing softly in her ear—no.

"Emmeline!"

With a sudden rush consciousness returned to the brave girl, and Jennet raised herself cautiously and bent over her sister. She could not see Emmeline's face, but her tears were raining down upon it as she touched the ice-cold hand.

"You have come, Jennet," she whispered. "I thought you would—I didn't want to die—all alone."

"You will not die, my darling!" cried the younger sister, with a sudden pang of fear.

"I have been lying here so long—so long!" sighed Emmeline. "It wasn't his fault that I fell, Jennet. He told me to meet him here—he was going away. I had only known him a month, but I did love him so. I thought he loved me, but he didn't—he didn't!"

A convulsive shudder shook the fallen girl from head to foot, and Jennet thought her dying, but after a time Emmeline rallied, and went on:

"I met him—when I went to see Alice—he was sketching. And since that we have met nearly every day, and yesterday he told me that he loved me."

"Oh, Emmie, my poor darling!"

"I believed him," moaned the dying girl. "But when he said 'Good-by,' and I asked him when he would come back, and that I might tell you all, he—he laughed, and said something about 'our little flirtation,' and told me I should soon forget him. Oh, Jennet, my heart broke then!"

The poor girl gave a hard, gasping sob, but Jennet's eyes were dry.

"He tried to kiss me," Emmeline whispered, "but I pushed him away—and he went. Oh, Jennet, he was very cruel—and I loved him so! I would have done anything for him, but he didn't want me—I am nothing to him——"

"You shall be something to him some day, Emmeline," said Jennet in a hard voice, but the other did not even hear her—she was growing weaker every instant.

"How did I come here?" she asked feebly. "He went—and I threw myself on the ground and prayed to die—and when the storm came—and I tried to run—and fell. Ah, I am falling now——"

Jennet put her arms around her sister and held her tight, bidding her be brave, for help could not be far off. But Emmeline was past all earthly consolation. The fall had inflicted fatal injuries on her fragile little frame, and she knew it, and had no wish to live.

"It was wrong to deceive you all," she said. "But Bertie persuaded me not to speak about him. He said he was incognito—a prince in disguise—and that if I would be patient a little longer—but he didn't love me——"

"I love you, Emmie—dearly, dearly!" cried Jennet.

Emmeline gave the faintest ghost of a laugh.

"Yes, yes, dear—but you will know—you will understand, some day," she replied. "And you will be happier—better—" Her voice died away, and when she spoke again she was no longer conscious of her surroundings.

Slowly, heavily, the moments dragged on. Jennet, with Emmeline's head on her lap, cried aloud at regular intervals for the help that had delayed so long. The lightning ceased to flicker, and the mouth of the shaft was dark.

"We shall die together," thought Jennet. But a sudden recollection thrilled through her, and she knew that her life-work still lay before her and that death would not claim her until she had seen her sister avenged.

Emmeline was babbling weakly. Her mind still ran on the brief, delirious love-dream that had come like a fiery meteor into the calm sky of her quiet, uneventful life.

"I do trust you, Bertie," she whispered; "I trust you as much as I love you, but I wish you would let me tell—yes, kiss me dear," she went on, as Jennet's lips touched her cold cheek; "I did not mean to vex you, Bertie!"

How long this lasted Jennet never know, but it seemed like an eternity to her. She was cramped and bruised, and aching from head to foot, but she had not a thought for herself.

A faint gray square was marking the opening overhead when Emmeline spoke again in her natural voice:

"I'm so tired, Jennet," she said, "I am going—to—sleep."

The last words were scarcely audible, and, in an agony of comprehension, the young girl shrieked again for the help that she now knew must come too late.

This time her cry was answered by Theodore Marsh, who, as he wandered, hatless and half beside himself, over and across the moors, had paused for an instant beside the shaft of the old pit, and heard the pitiful wail.

In less than half an hour nearly the whole male population of the parish was on the spot. They had been scouring the moors ever since the alarm was first given, and their womenfolk were waiting anxiously for their return. Only the children were sleeping in the village that night.

The old vicar and his curate stood side by side in the chilly gray dawn when the men who had come down with the ropes returned, bearing their burdens in their strong arms.

"Both there—one dead."

There was no need to proclaim the fact, for Emmeline's sweet little face, unaltered, save for its pallor, wore the stamp of death, and, after one glance, Theodore Marsh turned away with a groan of agony.

Jennet, struggling back from the insensibility that had stolen over her, saw the whole scene—the awed faces of the men, looking so haggard in the chill dawn, her uncle on his knees in the wet bracken, with his white head bowed, and Emmeline lying on the coat that some one had spread over the turf, her sightless eyes turned up to the cloudy heavens, and her lips set in their last sweet smile.

"She is dead," said Jennet. And then, before the spectators realized her intention, she staggered to her feet, and went and knelt down beside her sister.

"Emmeline," she whispered, "listen while I swear by all that we hold sacred in Heaven and on earth that, come what may, I will avenge your wrong—your broken heart and your cruel death!"

The bystanders could not bear what she was saying, and they hesitated to lead her away.

"Jennet—Jennet, my poor child!" quavered her uncle, and the girl heard him and obeyed his call. She had taken her oath, holding the dead girl's hand in her own as she spoke, but the inevitable reaction came suddenly upon her, and she flung herself sobbing into the old man's arms.

The events of the next few hours were a merciful blank to her, and when she recoverd consciousness she found that no suspicions had been excited in connection with Emmeline's terrible fall. A girl's timidity in a storm was quite enough to account for her accident; the people shuddered as they pictured her, half blinded by lightning, struggling through the gap in the wall and falling headlong to her death.

A strange restlessness seemed to possess Jennet, and the day after Emmeline's funeral she set off for the farm, to obtain the first clue to the identity of the man she meant to hunt down—to the end of the world if necessary.

Mrs. Scott, bewildered and half suspicious, could give her visitor little more information than she already possessed. Her lodger had left no address; he might come back again the following summer, but it was not likely. He was a nice, free-spoken young gentleman, and a beautiful painter, but he never talked of himself, and she was not one for meddling in other people's concerns.

Jennet dared not ask no more. She fancied that the woman looked at her with some curiosity, and she changed the subject hastily. A few minutes later, when she was sitting beside Alice's bed, Mrs. Scott came toiling up the steep stairs.

"Look here, miss,' she said displaying a sheet of paper apparently torn from a sketching block, and containing a roughly-outlined sketch of a girl's head. "I come across this in Mr. Donald's paper-basket after he had gone; 'twere all crumpled-up-like, but I straightened it out, and I think may be you'd like to have it, for 'tis the very image of poor Miss Emmeline."

Jennet held out her hand. She knew that the mother and daughter were watching her, and her voice was absolutely emotionless as she answered:

"Yes, there is a likeness. Thank you, Mrs. Scott, I will keep it."

The drawing offered a last proof, if any were needed, of the truth of Emmeline's story, for, despite its unfinished condition, every line of the gracefully-drawn little head and the sweet, pensive profile was wonderfully life-like. Jennet's eyes were tearless as she gazed at it, but when she was alone she pressed it to her lips, and renewed her vow in a passion of pity and love. She was only seventeen, but the events of that one awful night had changed her from a thoughtless, happy girl into a grave, thoughtful woman.

It was not Jennet only who was changed. Mr. Millard never quite recovered from the shock of his niece's tragic death. He grew more feeble and ailing every day, and when the first snowfall of the winter lay thick on Emmeline's grave, he, too, was laid to rest in the little country churchyard. His death left Jennet alone in the world, with an income of thirty pounds a year to stand between herself and starvation. She was very desolate and very young, but she had no fears for her future, for something within her assured her that she would five to avenge her sister's untimely fate.

Mr. Marsh would fain have helped the sister of the woman he had loved, but there was nothing he could do, for the girl declared her intention of becoming a governess, and, as a means to this end, she took a situation in a French school, and her old surroundings knew her no more.

CHAPTER II.

"I'm going, too. If you don't take me I shall bite and scratch and scream and——"

"Hallo! Hallo! What's all this about?"

Bert brought his angry war dances to an abrupt conclusion, and glanced up shamefacedly at his tall uncle.

"I want to meet her—Miss Dare, the new governess," he muttered. "And that beast Parsons won't let me!"

"Sir Maurice gave orders that Master Herbert was not to drive alone in the dog-cart, Mr. Serge," interrupted the aggrieved nurse, protecting her ankles from a fresh series of kicks. "He behaved that outrageous last time, and—Have done now, Master Bert, you bad little boy!"

"Bert, I am ashamed of you!"

"I want to go," said the boy. "I might go if you were driving, Uncle Serge."

"I daresay," returned his uncle, who had other views respecting the disposal of his time. But, as was usually the case where Bert was concerned, the man found that he had reckoned without his hosts. The lad, a spoiled, but undeniably attractive little fellow of six summers, was more than a match for his uncle. In fact he had yet to discover his master and had routed two governesses and a tutor within the past five months.

"I thought you'd come," he observed complacently, as Serge strode out onto the drive and informed the coachman that his services would be dispensed with. "I'd rather have Thomson, though, because it's such fun stopping at the Arkloe Arms"—Thomson grew purple and hurried to the horse's head—"for a glass of ale and a word with Patty," added Bertie remorselessly. "Patty's the barmaid, you know."

"It's high time your governess arrived, young man," observed Serge, as the trap went spinning down the long drive.

"She may come, but she won't stay," Bert said, with the easy assurance of experience. "She'll find me too naughty, or she'll find the place too dull, or she'll object to the haunt——"

"The what?" interposed Serge.

"The haunt—the ghost, you know. Parsons calls it the haunt. I heard her talking about it to Susan and Fannie. It is a woman, and it walks up and down the Oak Passage at night, and they wonder as how you can stand it, seeing as your room is there——"

"Nonsense! Rubbish! And, Bert, once for all, it is not necessary to copy the servants' mode of sp——"

"Hallo! Look out what you're about!" cried Bert, unheeding. They were rattling at a good pace through the picturesque

APPENDICITIS

Not at all Necessary to Operate in Many Cases.

Automobiles and Appendicitis scare some people before they are hit.

Appendicitis is often caused by too much starch in the bowels. Starch is hard to digest and clogs up the digestive machinery—also tends to form cakes in the cecum. (That's the blind pouch at entrance to the appendix.)

A N. H. girl had appendicitis, but lived on milk for awhile—then Grape-Nuts and got well without an operation.

She says: "Five years ago while at school, I suffered terribly with constipation and indigestion." (Too much starch, white bread, potatoes, etc., which she did not digest.)

"Soon after I left school I had an attack of appendicitis and for thirteen weeks lived on milk and water. When I recovered enough to eat solid food there was nothing that would agree with me, until a friend recommended Grape-Nuts.

"When I began to eat Grape-Nuts I weighed 98 lbs., but soon grew to 115 lbs. The distress after eating left me entirely and now I am like a new person."

(A little Grape-Nuts dissolved in hot water or milk would have been much better for this case than milk alone, for the starchy part of the wheat and barley is changed into a form of digestible sugar in making Grape-Nuts.) Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich. Read the little book, "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs. "There's a Reason."

little village, where thatched cottages, half hidden in the blossoming damson trees, encircled the old gray church and its attendant rectory. A girl was opening the gate that led into the road, and her dog, a little black terrier, had wriggled under the palings and was bounding right in front of the rapidly approaching dog-cart.

It was all over in a moment. There was a sharp yelp, a stifled scream, and, though a quick movement of the driver's strong wrists averted the worst, the wheels had passed over the dog's hind leg.

A laborer who was passing ran to the horse's head, and Serge sprang down to the road where the girl was kneeling in the dust beside her injured pet.

"It wasn't a bit your fault," she said, raising a pair of blue eyes to the man's perturbed face. "Tatters will run at every cart that passes and—oh, poor little fellow!—is he very badly hurt?"

"The leg is broken," replied Serge. "It is a marvel that the wheel did not pass over his body. Indeed, things might have been much worse."

"Thank you," she said gratefully. "You pulled up so cleverly. Do you think that man over there would carry him into the rectory for me?"

"The rectory?" repeated Serge, wondering what connection this remarkably pretty girl could be to the elderly bachelor rector. She seemed to read his thoughts, for she added, "I am Rose Maple, Mr. Ellicot's niece—I have come to spend the summer with him."

Serge rose to his feet and raised his hat.

"And I am Serge Arkloe, Sir Maurice's brother and agent," he began.

"If you don't come this instant-minute I shall drive right over that man!" cried Bertie shrilly.

"Bert, put down the reins!" shouted his uncle. "He is quite capable of it," he added hastily. "Thanks, Rogers—will you carry the dog for the lady? Good-by, Miss Maple; I shall call, if I may, to enquire after my victim."

The dog-cart dashed off, and Rose went into the house, where the rector and his old housekeeper were presently divided between admiration and dismay to see the quiet pluck she displayed in the somewhat trying interview that ensued between Tatters and the local veterinary surgeon.

"I believe I could have done it as well myself," she announced afterwards, coming out into the garden, where the rector was diligently hunting for snails. "Give me the basket, Uncle Rob; I'll carry it, and point out the little horrors—but I won't touch them. Who is Sir Maurice Arkloe? His brother seemed to imagine that I knew all about them."

"Ah, very likely!" responded the rector absently. "The Arkloes are the great folks here—poor enough in all conscience, but a good family. The Hall is a fine old place. Sir Maurice is a widower, and, though barely thirty-five, he is partially paralyzed, and a complete invalid, poor fellow! Serge—the brother whom you saw—lives with him and is his agent and right-hand man. If anything happens to Bertie he will succeed to the title and estate when Sir Maurice dies, for poor Lady Arkloe only survived the boy's birth a few hours."

Meanwhile Bert was making his uncle's life a burden to him. They had now reached the station without further mishap. The governess' train was due to arrive at the opposite platform, and Serge, who could not leave the horse, forbade the boy to cross the line.

"I don't see why," he was beginning for the twentieth time, when the bell rang, and the white smoke of the engine was visible over the top of the steep cutting beyond the station.

Serge, occupied in soothing Diamond's fears, did not see the child slip away through the booking office and run down the platform in the wake of the station master and the porter. The local train was still at some little distance, but the express was sweeping towards the station in the opposite direction, and had not the porter happened to glance over his shoulder the new governess would have found herself deprived of her pupil, and Serge's momentary abstraction would have cost him dear.

But honest Joe Dawes precipitated himself upon the child with such energy that, as he caught him in his arms, he tripped backwards, and they fell together, clearing the line, and rolling over and over to the bottom of the steep grassy bank below the signal box. With the roar of the express and the shock of Joe's sudden onslaught Bert was actually subdued into tears.

The train drew up just as Joe hauled the boy upon the platform, hatless, crumpled and sobbing.

Serge, who had found a boy to hold Diamond, came striding up. He was too horrified to scold the culprit, and it was not until the train was on its way again, and the excitement subsided, that even he remembered his business at the station.

"The lady's waiting, sir," observed Joe, pocketing a couple of half-sovereigns with a grin of delight. In his opinion they had been cheaply earned, for he was none the worse for his tumble.

Serge started and looked around. He saw a tall, slender girl, about twenty-five, it seemed, and very plainly dressed, with a pale, clear-cut profile, chiefly remarkable for its intense pallor, and dark gray eyes that looked as though they had swept away the mirth that should have lingered in their depths. It was the face of a woman aged before her time, but it had a peculiar beauty of its own. People who understood such matters said that had Jennet Dare condescended to take more pains over her personal appearance she might have vied successfully with many a full-fledged beauty; but, so far, the girl had cared for none of those things, and her neat coat and skirt and little black hat were of the severest cut.

The return drive was remarkably uneventful. Looking back upon it in days to come, Serge could not recall a word of the conversation. He privately voted the governess "slow," and the girl, for her part, thought him lamentably weak in his dealings with Bert.

By the time that she retired that night Jennet had gained a partial knowledge of her surroundings, and had been interviewed by Mrs. Talbot, Sir Maurice's aunt, a gentle old lady, who was nominally the head of his household and practically a cipher, for she suffered from bronchitis and rarely left her room. Miss Dare had fought—and gained—a battle with Bert, and heard Parsons' reluctant admission that any one who could master the "precious child" would be a godsend to the household at large.

Jennet's responsibilities did not weigh upon her, so far as Bert was concerned. She had been a fully-qualified governess now for the past five years, and had never once failed in her management of the most unruly pupil. But she was not a popular teacher. Children are quick to discover and resent a heart unsympathetic and cold, and Jennet Dare's whole life was centered in one all-absorbing ambition. The oath that she had taken as she knelt beside her dying sister stood between herself and the happiness that most women accept as their right.

The man who had been the cause of Emmeline's untimely fate still remained undiscovered, but Jennet knew that sooner or later he would cross her path. She was thinking about Emmeline now, as she leaned out into soft spring darkness. The little grave in the churchyard at home was green and well cared for, and Jennet visited the village at regular intervals, but the artist had never returned to the moorland farm.

"I must have patience—patience!" said Jennet softly.

The clock struck midnight as she rose to her feet, only to find that she had blown out her candle an hour and a half before, without ascertaining the position of the matches. A light was absolutely necessary, for the box containing her night requisites was still unpacked.

Jennet stood, undecided and frowning. Suddenly she remembered having noticed a matchbox on the mantelpiece three doors further down, on the opposite side of the wide passage.

"I will go and get it," she thought.

She felt her way across the room and opened the door. The passage was quite dark, but she made her way to the opposite side without any difficulty. She had passed her hand over the panels of the first door when the sound of piteous muffled sobs brought her to an abrupt standstill.

The weeping seemed to proceed from some region below the passage and the person who gave utterance to it was certainly not shut up in any room, for even the sufferer's quickened breathing was audible, in the intense stillness of the house. Jennet was not frightened. Her nerves were good. One of her late pupils had been given to sleep-walking, and, thinking that one of the servants might be undergoing the same experience, she turned instinctively in the direction of the staircase that connected the schoolroom wing with the rest of the house. Her fingers closed over the baluster, and she passed safely down the somewhat steep steps into the corridor below, at the end of which came the fine old oak staircase.

The staircase was divided half-way down from the second story, one flight leading into the vestibule and the other opening out into a long winding passage on the ground floor, known as the "Oak Passage." This communicated at the extreme end with the servants' quarters, but was never used by them. It was possible to look down from the landing above, where the staircase branched off and gain a birdseye view of part of the passage, and, as the sobs unmistakably proceeded from that direction, Jennet found her way thither.

The wailing cry was repeated with an eerie effect, and for the first time a vague presentiment of evil stole over Jennet as she paused irresolutely, leaning over the wide, carved banisters, gazing down into the murky depths of the passage below.

Suddenly a faint light lit up the unfamiliar surroundings; the dark paneled walls were dimly outlined, and a slender figure was outlined against them—the figure of a girl in a trailing white robe with a heavy silver candlestick clasped in her outstretched hands and her long hair flowing about her shoulders.

Jennet could not see the face, but she knew at once that this was no sleep-walker. The little fragile figure, the helpless droop of the head, nay, the very echo of the low, heart-broken sobbing, made her shiver and gasp in agonized bewilderment. But when the girl raised her face and gazed upwards for a moment with strange, unseeing blue eyes Jennet could restrain herself no longer.

"It is she or her spirit!" she gasped. "Emmeline! Emmeline!"

But, though she would have shrieked the dear name aloud, her tongue seemed paralyzed, and she could only return that vacant, unconscious gaze.

The figure, too, stood motionless. The light, reflected through a fold of the white drapery, gave a ghastly suggestion of unsubstantiality, and the sad face, with its halo of yellow hair, had no touch of color in lips or cheek to discount its unearthly aspect; but a faint, sweet smile flickered round the little mouth. It was thus that Emmeline had looked and smiled when they laid her down on the heather at the edge of the old shaft nine weary years before.

Jennet gazed, spellbound. Suddenly a whisper sounded through the silence.

"Emmeline! Come!"

The vision started slightly, and, bowing its head, glided away so swiftly that the extinction of the light was Jennet's first warning of its departure. A sudden terror swept over her; her knees gave way, and she sank in a heap on the landing. She knew no more until she opened her eyes to find the early spring dawn stealing through the staircase windows and chasing away the shadows in the passage below.

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Jennet crept back to her room. Strong-minded woman as she deemed herself, she knew that the vision of the past night was no outcome of a disordered imagination. She did not doubt for an instant that fate had brought her within reach of the fulfilment of her vow. Emmeline had been permitted to appear to warn her—to prepare and strengthen her for the conflict that must ensue ere her vengeance could be completed.

"I knew it! I knew it!" whispered Jennet half aloud. "My darling, can you hear me? I am ready, Em—I am quite ready!"

And then, turning to her boxes, she began to unpack and lay away her possessions, and to buckle on the armour of quiet reserve that had stood her so often in good stead. There was war in the schoolroom that day, and for many a day to come, but victory was invariably on the governess' side, and by degrees Bert realized that he had met his match, and he grew fairly amenable.

Jennet saw very little of Serge, and her interviews with the master of the house were few and far between, for Sir Maurice disliked strangers. The girl could not help being very sorry for him; it was sad to see such death-in-life, for, in spite of his prematurely whitened hair, he was not much older than his brother, and had evidently been by far the handsomer of the two.

One afternoon, about a fortnight after Jennet's arrival at the Hall, the girl lost sight of her pupil—no very unusual occurrence—only to discover him, very busy and important, in the housekeeper's room.

"I'm covering old jam pots," he announced. "And now Milly and I are going to put them away in the storeroom cupboard, and Mrs. Mellor can stop here and talk to you."

Mrs. Mellor, the housekeeper, looked more dismayed than honored when Jennet accepted this somewhat one-sided invitation and ensconced herself in an easy chair.

Bert ran off, following the still-room maid, and Mrs. Mellor took up her knitting and proceeded to entertain her visitor by complimenting her upon the improvement already visible in her pupil.

"He's a good child, bless his little heart," said the housekeeper, "and it was grievous to see him so spoiled and fractious, for he minded no one, not even his father—and he has a mind to be obeyed, has Sir Maurice!"

"Has he been ill long?" asked Jennet.

Mrs. Mellor shook her head.

"Seven years, miss, come next November. It began with a chill—he got wet through and never changed his damp clothes—and he was in bed for months after with rheumatic fever. He never rightly got the better of that and the creeping paralysis was upon him at the time of her ladyship's death, six years ago."

"How sad!" said Jennet absently. "Mrs. Mellor, I want to ask you something. I do not like to trouble Mrs. Talbot with such trivialities, but I think you may help me. Master Herbert is very fond of talking about some ghost story, which he has heard, I imagine, from the maids. The ghost to which he refers is supposed to 'walk' occasionally in the Old Passage. The whole thing is ridiculous, of course, but it is bad for the child, and if you—" She broke off, alarmed by the sudden change in her companion's face.

"A ghost—in the Oak Passage!" murmured Mrs. Mellor. The knitting had slipped from her nerveless fingers, and her face took on an aspect of abject terror.

"You have heard the story," she said, with a little laugh. "Perhaps you believe it, Mrs. Mellor? Perhaps you have seen the——"

"Hush! For Heaven's sake, hush!" The woman was shaking from head to foot. "I—I don't know. We—it is never spoken of here! Mr. Serge gave orders that any servant who repeated such nonsense should be dismissed."

"But what has it to do with him?" asked Jennet.

The housekeeper hesitated and mumbled; then, with a strange, sudden defiance, she raised her head and said:

"It walks in the Oak Passage, you see, outside his rooms, and there's some story about him and a pretty young girl. She's dead, and no one ever heard the rights of it, but it is enough for fools to build on. They say that he killed her, and that she walks up and down crying and pleading with him to keep troth with her. Of course, miss, I shouldn't have mentioned such rubbish if I hadn't feared you might imagine worse things. Servants will talk, you know, but none of them really believed a word against Mr. Serge."

The woman had quite recovered her self-control now. "I've been in the family many years, miss," she added, "and it goes against me to repeat such foolishness. But I'm shocked that Master Herbert should have got hold of it, and I told you everything that you might know what you have to contend with."

At that moment Bert himself burst into the room, and the tete-a-tete was brought to an end. But, though Jennet spoke to him in her usual voice, and was to all appearance as calm and composed as ever, her pulses were throbbing wildly, and she felt instinctively that she was on the verge of some great discovery.

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THE LAY OF THE KANSAS HEN.

We have read of Maud on a summer day,
Who raked, barefooted, the new-mown hay;
We have read of the maid in the early morn,
Who milked the cow with the crumpled horn;
And we've read the lays that the poets sing,
Of the rustling corn and the flowers of spring;
But of all the lays of tongue or pen,
There's naught like the lay of the Kansas hen.
Long, long before Maud rakes the hay,
The Kansas hen begin to lay,
And ere the milkmaid stirs a peg,
The hen is up and has dropped her egg;
The corn must rustle and flowers spring
If they hold their own with the barn-yard ring.
If Maud is needing a hat or gown,
She doesn't hustle her hay to town,
But goes to the store and obtains her suit
With a basketful of her fresh hen-fruit;
If the milkmaid's beau makes a Sunday call,
She doesn't feed him on milk at all,
But works up eggs in a custard pie
And stuffs him full of chicken fry;
And when the old man wants a horn
Does he take the druggist a load of corn?
Not much? He simply robs a nest,
And to town he goes—you know the rest.
He hangs around with the cliques and rings,
And talks of politics and things,
While his poor wife stays at home and scowls,
But is saved from want by those selfsame fowls;
For, while her husband lingers there,
She watches the cackling hens with care,
And gathers eggs, and the eggs she'll hide,
Till she saves enough to stem the tide,
Then hail, all hail, to the Kansas hen,
The greatest blessing of all to men!
Throw up your hats and emit a howl
For the presevering barn-yard fowl!
Corn may be king, but it's plainly seen,
The Kansas hen is the Kansas queen.

Weak Point.

The woman awoke and found the bold burglar rummaging in the wardrobe.

"I am going to call the police," she exclaimed, placing her hand on the alarm button.

"Blast the luck!" mumbled the intruder. "That's what I get for being careful."

"Careful?"

"Yes; I could have ransacked that wardrobe ten minutes ago, but I was unusually careful for fear of injuring that beautiful autumn hat."

"You—you really think it pretty?"

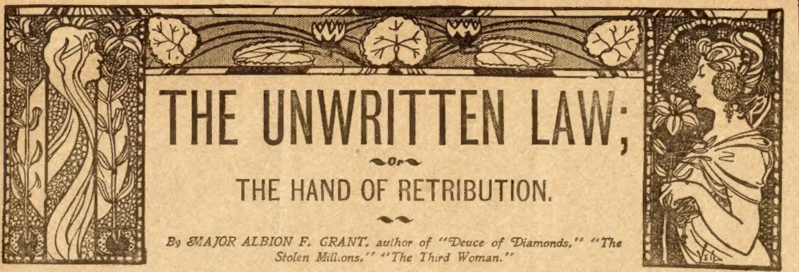
"Pretty? Why, it is gorgeous, ma'am, and rather than displace a feather in it I ran the risk of being captured. You wouldn't call the police now, would you?"

"N-no, I guess you can go this time."

And slipping a couple of silver hairbrushes in his pocket the burglar winked at the cuckoo clock and vanished.

Then He Fainted.

A man received a telegram,
His heart did nearly fail.
It read: "Your wife got twins last night;
Expect some more by mail."



THE UNWRITTEN LAW;

Or

THE HAND OF RETRIBUTION.

By MAJOR ALBION F. GRANT, author of "Deuce of Diamonds," "The Stolen Millions," "The Third Woman."

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CHAPTER XI.

THE BLACK PUMA.

The Reptile of the Amazon, or La Death, as she called herself, the woman who had warned Quincy Weston in the South American cafe, sat tiger-like watching a man who stood in the shadows of some of the large trees that beautified one of the public gardens of Rio de Janeiro.

She was a beautiful, dark-skinned creature, with the movements of the silken puma of her native land. The man whom she regarded with such caution, not to say suspicion, was a handsome person in the uniform of the Brazilian army and was none other than Colonel Manuel Campo.

He was evidently waiting for some one with whom he had an appointment and, suspecting this, the girl waited with the patience of her race.

At last a figure approached the officer and the two came together in the shadows of the foliage.

Then with cat-like movements the woman glided forward and became the practiced spy.

Her ears were on the alert, and for some moments she remained as motionless as a statue.

"You have the net spread?" said Campo.

The other nodded.

"And you are sure, of course, that the game will enter?"

"He cannot fail. The lure will get him. He has come from the far-away land to die."

The watchful girl started at these words, but her vigilance did not abate one jot.

"And the Americano?" questioned the officer.

"He is ready, too."

"Good! Then we will proceed. You have seen that the net will hold?"

"It has never let any one through its meshes."

"That is true," was the reply, accompanied by a little laugh. "It always holds, Tara."

The couple walked away together and the girl in the shadows remained where she was.

Presently, however, she started and sprang away.

In a few moments she was in the vicinity of the hotel where Weston was quartered.

Her eager eyes shone like diamonds. She was on the alert in every fiber and seemed the thing after which she was named—the Reptile of the Amazon.

But she grew tired of waiting. Weston did not emerge from the hotel. If he was there he did not care to show himself on the streets. Perhaps her warning had been heeded. He might have taken flight and gone back to his own land. If so, he would escape the doom that had been accorded him and there would not be another victim of the "Black Puma."

Weston, the American, had done nothing of the kind. He was not in the hotel, and if La Death had searched the right spot for him he would have been found.

In another street Weston was almost groping his way. It was a dark way leading deep into a bad quarter of the city, but he had received word that if he would appear at a certain house at a certain hour he would learn something that would throw light upon his mission.

At last he reached a tumble-down place that was as ill-boding as the street itself, and he looked about him to be sure of his bearings.

Satisfying himself, at last, that he was not wrong, he approached the low-browed door and rapped. It moved lazily on its hinges and opened a little.

Weston did not like the looks of the den, for it seemed nothing less, but catching sight of a wizened face beyond the door, he made bold to enter.

In another moment he found himself in a narrow, ill-smelling corridor and the door was shut behind him.

The corridor was almost dark, and but for a streak of light ahead, not broader than his finger, he would have found himself in stygian gloom.

A hand touched his arm and he was led forward.

Not a word was spoken by his guide, and for a little time he was led down that forbidding hall until another door swung open and he was pushed across a threshold.

Weston was armed. He had not come on this doubtful errand without precaution, and now felt that he had with him a friend that might stand him in need.

The conductress had not deserted him, and now she stood revealed to the young American as a woman of great age, but with the beadiest eyes he had ever seen in the head of a human being.

"Well?" said Weston, looking the hag over from head to foot as he studied the little figure. "You see I am here. This is La Posa, isn't it?"

The creature nodded.

"Then I am ready to see the person who sent me the note."

"Si senor," was the reply, and Weston thought he caught the birth of a smile at the woman's lips.

"Why don't you go ahead and let me see the writer of that note?"

The old hag turned and walked across the room.

"Senor will see the lady of the house in a little while," she said over her shoulder.

She vanished through a door and Weston was alone. The light went down and darkened the room.

Presently he caught the strange sound of a purr, then the door opened and the American retreated to the wall with his heart in his throat.

Well might he retreat to the wall and hug it with but little color in his face.

Something had entered the chamber. It was not human, yet it had the graceful movements of a woman of high degree. There were the dark eyes of a tropical beauty, the lithe figure of a bell of the Amazon, but there was the long silken tail, the soft fur and the belly of the dreaded puma of the forest.

A cry broke the lips of the American apart.

For the moment he forgot his weapon and stood gazing at the apparition of terror and death by which he was confronted.

The great cat crouched on the floor and licked herself, but at the same time kept her eyes on her victim.

Weston recovered at last. He saw that he was trapped; he thought of La Death's warning, and a thrill went through his whole frame and he inwardly cursed his folly.

Again the door opened and a second puma, the mate of the first and the male, bounded into the room.

He crouched alongside his mate and eyed Weston with the same baleful eyes.

He might shoot one of the beasts, but he would have the other at his throat before the smoke cleared away.

This rushed through Weston's mind with the speed of a lava current. To fight for his life against those monsters could have but one ending. He was doomed, yet he did not intend to give up without battle.

He could go no farther. The wall balked him. It seemed a wall of iron and ahead was the death of the Amazonian jungles, the terrible doom which he doubted not had overtaken others before him. Nearer and nearer crawled the mates of the forest. Weston felt that their movements were watched by some one beyond the opposite wall. There were eyes that saw all, and he must perish there without the avenging of Kendall Gray nor the thanks of Kitty.

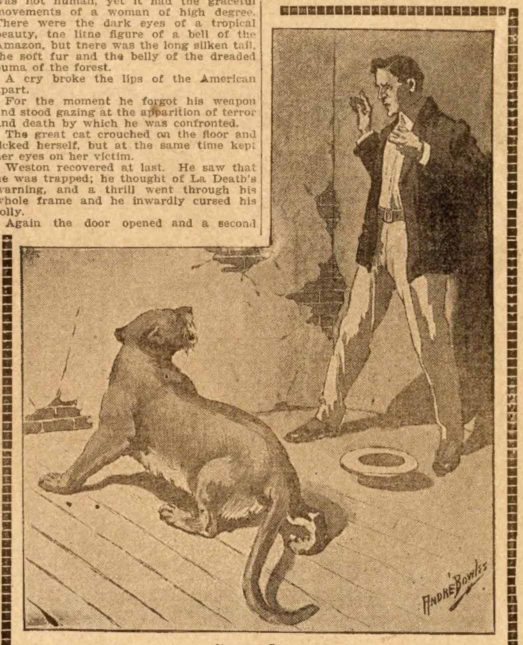
Seconds were hours in that hell of the Brazilian city. Weston had never dreamed of such a fate, and he wondered what had become of Sharp, the detective.

Suddenly he drew his revolver and cocked it.

The slight click seemed to throw new life into the creatures on the floor.

They were making ready to launch themselves upon him and he knew that the struggle was at hand.

Which one he should shoot first he did not know. Both were equally dangerous, and if he killed one——



It was a Puma.

There was that same thought again—he would have the mate at his throat.

Not a word came through the wall ahead. The silence of death reigned there.

"It is life or death," said Weston under his breath, "and most probably it is death."

Throwing up the weapon he covered the female quickly but surely, glanced along the blue barrel of the revolver and was about to press the trigger when the light failed.

In another moment he was in stygian darkness.

And in that gloom, as he knew, the pumas could see his every movement and he would be completely at their mercy.

Weston dropped the weapon and thought rapidly. He edged down the wall to a corner which he could find without eyes and wedged himself into it. He did not seem to breathe now. His hands were cold and his face sweated drops that seemed to freeze on his cheeks.

CHAPTER XII.

THE HOLE IN THE WALL.

There is an end to all things.

The darkness remained in the room and felt almost palpable to the victim of the Puma League.

Why did not the animals spring? What held them back? What mysterious power controlled the blood-lust of the pests of the forest? Whose hand held them in leash?

As for Weston he had but to wait. There was no escape. He was cooped up with the pumas and had only to wait for that death between nail and jaw which overshadowed him.

But they did not come on. He was not dragged from his corner in the power of the monsters. He still held it, breathing again and with finger at the trigger of his weapon.

At last he thought he heard a slight noise. It came from he knew not where, the chamber was so dark. A moment later the room became flooded with a little light. He could see things again.

The pumas were gone. The room held no one but himself and he looked everywhere in hopes of seeing what had become of his executioners.

Who had called off the beasts he did not know. Their absence had told him that something had interfered for him. Perhaps he had been given a respite of life.

Weston stood for some time in his corner and recovered. He was sure that the hour of doom had only been put off. But he was still in the hands of his enemies.

All at once there came a noise from the opposite wall. A door slid to one side and the young American saw there the beady eyes of the woman who had admitted him to the place.

"How does the senor like the cats of the forest?" queried the hag.

Weston scowled and sent an inaudible curse in her direction. She grinned at him and then went on.

"The senor is a fool to come to this land. He knew that its great cats kill."

"I know that I am in the hands of monsters. I have played the fool, but I don't see why I should be taunted with my folly."

"They will come back, never fear. The cats are not far away."

"Tell me why I have been lured to this place. Into whose hands have I fallen?"

There was no answer.

"Is this the work of the Puma League?"

"It is the hand of fate, senor. It is the death that comes to all fools from the far-off land."

"But why?"

It was a question the young American could not keep back. It came to his lips unbidden.

"Does he not know?" asked the woman at the window. "Does he not know that he cannot escape the eyes of the Black Puma?"

"It would seem so. I was warned——"

"By whom, senor?"

There was eagerness in the tones.

"No! you would turn on the person who warned me and whose warning I did not obey."

"Was it the Reptile of the Amazon?"

The American started but did not speak.

"The senor will not tell," laughed the face at the hole. "He need not tell. What will he give for freedom?"

Weston knew that he was only being tantalized by the hag in yellow and kept his lips sealed.

"Freedom is dear to all men and the senor has a quest," continued the woman. "The teeth of the cats are sharp and can rend the toughest morsel. This is the land, the home of the Black Puma——"

"And you are the portress of their den."

"The senor would not buy his liberty. He prefers to die at the hands of the forest cats?"

Weston thought a moment.

Perhaps, after all, this hag had freedom for him. Might she not be a traitress, and was it not her voice that had called off the animals?

"What will you take for my liberty?" he asked.

"What will the senor give?"

He stepped across the room and stopped under the hole where the two eyes glittered.

"I did not come here to harm you or yours," he said. "You are not my quest. I am on another mission. It does not concern you——"

"I am old Inez."

"Well, Inez, I will give you much for freedom. I will give you all I have for it."

"How much has the senor got?"

Weston drew back. This creature was playing with him. She did not intend to betray the Black Puma. It was farthest from her thoughts; her sloe-black eyes told him another story while she talked to him of liberty.

Suddenly he thrust the muzzle of the weapon still in his hand into her face and at the same time with the other hand he seized the dark wrist that rested on the sill of the hole in the wall.

The woman drew back the length of the strange tether, but Weston clung to it like a man at the end of his string.

He pulled at the wrist till he felt the tendons give; he drew the face to the brink of the hole and saw fear in the eyes of the hag.

Aye, he could pull her through the hole with exertion. He knew that her body was nearly fleshless, though not very supple, for the woman had lost her youth and her body was like the body of a mummy, only it had life in it.

The eyes of the hag seemed to start from her head. Her hand was cold and Weston wondered if he were not pulling at the hand of a corpse. But for the snaky orbs he would have believed that the woman was dead.

"My freedom?" he laughed while he tugged at the body. "I will buy it at the expense of your life. I will drag you through this hole if nothing but a skeleton comes with my hands."

He pulled anew with all his strength, forcing the attenuated figure toward him.

Inez no longer cried out. Her lips were welded and her eyes were lost in the cavernous depths of their sockets.

"Come flesh or bones!" cried the young American. "I will see which I will have for a companion in the lair of the puma. You don't like the change, Senora Inez? Well, I can't say that I'd like it, either. It is your life or my liberty, and that you can purchase with a little discretion."

The figure of the hag of Rio was half-way through the hole. It would come all the way if he kept on.

Just then Weston heard a noise behind him.

What, the pumas again?

He thought he saw life in the eyes which had grown dim. They scintillated again. What had the woman seen?

The noise was heard again. It was like the purring of some great animal, but it was beyond the room. Weston did not look behind him. He was occupied with the enemy in front.

Suddenly the lips of Inez parted. A little cry escaped her and the American looked over his shoulder.

The female puma had come back!

The great cat crouched on the floor and was eyeing him while her tail made circles in the air.

"Come on! Don't be backward, Mother Inez!" laughed Weston. "I'm going to give you your money's worth! What, are you trying to cheat me and the puma?" and with a prodigious effort he jerked the hag through the opening and dropped her on the floor at his feet.

"That's good!" chuckled the American. "You don't look very nice here, but you look the she-devil you are."

The eyes glistened and the yellow teeth came together like the serrated jaws of a steel trap.

A low growl turned Weston's attention to the crouching cat behind him.

The she-puma was in the act of throwing herself upon him!

Quick as a flash he caught up the body of Inez and held it in midair for a moment.

In another instant he hurled it through space and saw it land plump in the face of the cat of the Amazon.

There was a terrible cry, half human, for the great beast rolled backward and fell against the wall with her claws striking at the singular missile that had landed against her.

Weston drew back and lifted the weapon. He waited for a shot in which he would not hit the witch. In another moment he found his chance and the room echoed to the loud report of the revolver.

The puma fell sideways and Weston sprang forward. He threw himself against the wall, it yielded and he tumbed headlong into a dark place. As he regained his feet he recoiled with a cry for a terrible sound had smote upon his ears, like the blood cry of another animal.

CHAPTER XIII.

OUT OF THE TOILS.

While Quincy Weston was wrestling with fate in the lair of the Black Puma in the Brazilian capital, in another quarter of that city a man was closeted with Colonel Campo.

This person was Townley Sharp, the young detective, who had gone out with Weston and who had deceived that young man as to his real mission.

Sharp was the agent of Mrs. Burke-Deland; her money had sent him forth, and he had carried a letter from Marice De Marne to the Brazilian officer.

Twirling his dense mustache, Manuel Campo had listened to Sharp's account of the crime of the Othello Gardens, and had expressed his opinion that they would entrap Weston and block his game.

"By this time," said the colonel, "our man is in the toils. He knows that the teeth of the puma are sharp."

"You have caged him then?"

"Aye, we have him in the net of death!" Campo looked at his watch. "The hour of doom has passed. Would you come, senor, and see the work of the cats?"

Sharp rose with eagerness and followed Campo from the room.

They went down a number of dark streets, and at last the officer let them into a forbidding looking house and closed the door.

"This isn't a very nice place," he said, with a twist of his neck as he glanced at his companion. "In fact it is one of the ugliest places in the capital. But," with a shrug of his broad shoulders, "it quite answers our purpose."

Thereupon the officer called a name to which he did not get any response and, a little perturbed at this, he went on:

"Old Inez is usually on guard," he said. "She must be somewhere."

Half a minute later he opened another door and looked into a half lighted chamber.

An oath in Spanish fell from his lips.

"Caramba! what is this? He should be here!"

"What is that over there in the corner?" queried Sharp. "Seems to me it has the shape of a human figure——"

Campo bounded across the room and stooped over the object that was huddled in one corner.

"By my soul! it is Inez!" Sharp heard him cry. "'Tis the portress of the den! And the prey has escaped!"

"Not Weston?"

The old hag was breathing and Campo carried her from the place into another room.

"The cats?" he cried. "Where are the cats?"

Throwing the body of Inez upon a couch, he ran back with Sharp at his heels and bounded across the scene of the terrible combat with the pumas.

In the dark place beyond the battle chamber he stumbled over something soft and then saw the body of the female animal.

"She is dead," he groaned. "The American wretch has killed her!"

Sharp bent forward and took a long breath.

Never before had he seen such a beautiful yet vicious looking beast.

"She looks strong enough to master a dozen men," he said.

"So she does, but the American was too much for her."

They went back to old Inez.

The hag by this time was sitting up with staring eyes and ugly mien.

"Where is the devil from the North?" she gasped, as her deep eyes flashed.

"You should know," responded Campo. "I left you here to do the deed."

"But he pulled me through the hole and I haven't got a speck of flesh on my bones. It was terrible, and then he went out the door and over the puma——"

"And got away?"

"What, haven't you found him?"

"No. He is gone."

"But you can trap him and you will hand him over to me and not to the pumas?"

"We will see," said the officer. "Come, sir," to Sharp. "The rascal is still in the city and there are other traps."

Yes, the game was out of the trap.

Back at his hotel Weston was recalling with many a shudder his adventures in the lair of the Black Puma.

All at once he happened to see his mail on the table and sprang to read it.

Among the lot was a letter which he opened with eagerness and began to devour its contents.

"So they are going to clear him?" he ejaculated. "It is the deceiving plea of the 'unwritten law' and it is taking hold of the people."

Among the papers just from home Weston read the story of the latest phases of the "Hector Knight Case," how the best counsel had been secured, how Marice De Marne was receiving the sympathy of all classes, and how the drift was toward the slayer, while Gray was held up to all as a wicked man who had persecuted Marice till her lover had silenced him with a bullet.

As he read, his cheeks reddened with indignation and his breath came and went in little gasps.

"They do not know the truth," said he, as he laid the last paper down. "They think this girl an angel, yet they shall some day be undeceived and my poor friend shall be vindicated!"

He felt that the Puma League would not let him rest in undisturbed repose.

He had escaped one danger and he would have to be on his guard to keep out of the thousand and one traps they would set for him.

The Reptile of the Amazon had not lied; her warning was true, and if he had but listened——

But why shed tears after the pitcher was broken? He had learned a lesson which would stand him in need in the future, and he would have to fight out the battle alone.

When next he saw Kitty he told her the story of his perils.

"I am not surprised," said Gray's love. "The Black Puma is a terror in this land. But how came it to know that you are here to vindicate Kendall?"

"There is a traitor somewhere," answered Weston. "And why not a letter or a cablegram from Marice De Marne herself?"

"If she is Helen O'Ziris she will fight for her secret."

"And Helen O'Ziris she is. Unmask her in court and she will feel all sympathy fall from her as garments from her shoulders."

Kitty was silent for a moment.

"You have not seen La Death since your escape?"

"No."

"The girl has some reason for warning you?"

"Doubtless. Who is she?"

"Once a singer in the grand opera here. She sang at times with Helen. It was said at one time that she was under the protection of Colonel Campo——"

"And has turned against him?"

"I cannot say. As she warned you she evidently knew that you had incurred the enmity of the Black Puma."

"Think you that Marice De Marne is connected with the Order?"

"I do not know. It is said that all members bear on their shoulder the tattoo of a puma's head."

"Ah, that would unmask her!" cried Weston.

"Unless——"

"Unless what?"

"Unless," said Kitty, "she has had the mark removed."

Weston thought a moment.

"I have a friend in the city at home," he went on. "I can trust him. A telegram would put him onto the secret mark of the Puma.'

"But you would have to be wary. If she suspected such a thing she would not show up at the trial."

"That is true. I don't want to frighten her from that. If I can collect the evidence I seek I will confront her with it, and then the examination.'

"That seems the proper thing to do. And now you must be careful, Mr. Weston. It all depends on you, and the Black Puma will thwart you if possible."

Weston went back to his quarters in thoughtful mood. The game was getting interesting, the trail warm; the dread of the order of the Black Puma was no myth as he had occasion to know. Yes, he would be careful; for the sake of Kitty and the honor of his dead friend he would come out of it all triumphant. Would he? We shall see.

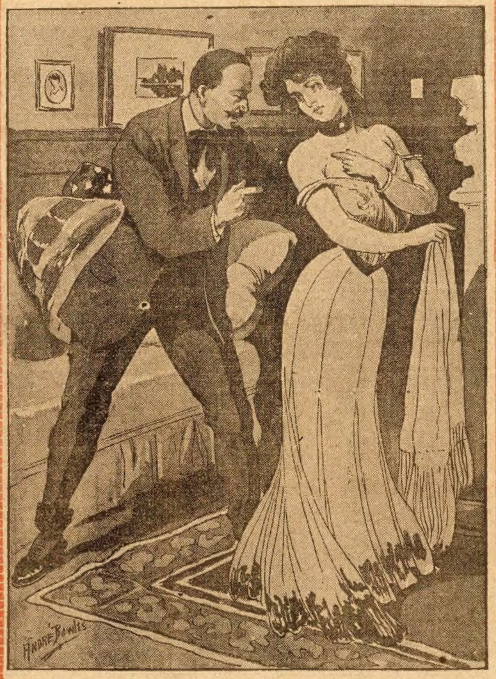
CHAPTER XIV.

A BOLT FROM THE BLUE.

Free from the mark of the Black Puma, Marice De Marne came out again.

Daily she visited Hector Knight in prison, conferred with his attorneys and went often to the home of his parents. There she was received by the family, and if Noble Knight, the father, bore her any ill-will he did not manifest it.

It would be some time before the trial. There are delays in law and the defense did not care to hurry matters, since the drift of public opinion seemed coming their way, and they felt they could afford to wait till it was fully crystallized.



"Wonderful!" he exclaimed, "It is gone."

Yet Noble Knight had not given up his desire to look deeper into Marice's past. The information he had obtained through his private detective had served as an incentive to learn more, and he felt that something had happened on a certain night in the den of Padouche, the evil spirit of the Tenderloin.

Marice was not barred from the circles of good society. Mrs. Burke-Deland saw to it that she had the same privileges that she enjoyed among the "400," and she kept Marice in the limelight constantly.

Some weeks after the crime of the Othello Gardens Marice was startled to be accosted by a man on the street.

She had just alighted from the Deland carriage and was about to enter a fashionable milliner's.

The man was commonplace looking, a little dark of skin like a South American, but Marice did not notice this at first.

"You are Miss De Marne?" said the man as he came closer.

"I am. But I am at a loss to know who addresses me."

"True. But you know the deeps of the puma's eyes?"

Every vestige of color left Marice's face and she seemed to gasp.

"I do not want to frighten you, but you will see me?"

"Where? When?"

"Tonight at nine; at your home."

"No, not there!" cried the girl. "Mrs. Deland——"

Mrs. Deland will not be at home tonight."

"I know nothing of her going away."

"She will not disturb us," said the man deliberately. "You will be there."

That was all. The man was off like a flash. Marice completed her errand and went back.

Mrs. Deland told her upon her return that she would pass the evening with her sister on the next avenue, therefore Marice could have the house to herself.

How eagerly Marice De Marne waited for the hour set by the dark-skinned man!

Alone in the home of her benefactor with her heart beating wildly she watched the hands of the clock and counted the minutes it ticked off.

At precisely nine the bell tingled.

The expectant girl answered it in person. She led the man into the brilliantly lighted parlor and then studied him long and closely, looking him over as if calling up some long vanished past.

"I am here from the head of the Black Puma," said the man, breaking the little silence that was becoming on Marice's part irritating.

"From—the—Black Puma?"

"Yes, direct."

Marice threw a quick glance toward the door.

"You must excuse me," she said. "I know nothing about the Black Puma——"

"Come," was the interruption, "it will not do, though you are expected to be cautious in this land. I know by what perils you are surrounded just now. And caution is a good thing. We have failed."

The cheeks of the girl in the limelight went white.

"We have failed and not on our account. That man is a devil."

"What man?"

"The man who came down there after the affair of the Gardens."

"And you tell me that you have failed?"

"Yes, and he may be on his way North."

It seemed that Marice would sink through the chair she occupied.

"I have come to prepare you for the worst," he went on. "If he comes back with what he went after——"

"He will be baffled right here!" cried the girl. "We are now ready to meet him."

"With the mark on your shoulder?"

A haughty smile, followed by a look of triumph, was the answer the dark man got.

"He would find nothing were he to look," said she.

"Nothing?"

"I have told you."

"But——"

"It is gone!"

"The puma's head?"

"Yes."

A look of incredulity came into the man's eyes and he drew back a pace.

"Impossible," said he. "You cannot rid yourself of the sign of the Black Puma."

"I have done so."

In another moment the white drapery that concealed Marice's alabaster shoulder fell off in soft folds and the man with the dark little eyes craned his neck forward.

"Wonderful!' he exclaimed. "It is gone, but, woman, you have broken the law of the Puma."

"How?"

"That was a life mark. When you lose it you pass from the protection of the Order."

"I did not understand it so."

"But you took the oath?"

"How can I forget that?"

"And when you lose that mark you become the enemy of the Order."

"But the reason!" cried the fair girl. "You do not know. Everything is at stake, my future, my happiness, my future husband's life, and more—my honor."

The man laughed a cruel, bitter laugh that seemed to make his little eyes dance like dervishes.

"The honor of Helen O'Ziris!" he flashed. "The honor of the woman caught in the toils of crime in South America and who, but for the Black Puma, would be living in a cell under ground."

"Hush!" and the girl threw up her jeweled hands. "Are you man or devil?"

"Both, sister," he replied. "You are still Helen O'Ziris, the opera singer. You are still the woman who led the young Vemosa——"

"I did that at the command of the Puma," cried Marice, with hands at her ears. "You know if you belong to the Order."

"Since you have discarded the mark and thus broken your vows you must fight your own battles. You must fight against the man who has escaped the jaws of the cats of the forest."

Marice De Marne rose and tottered across the room, watched like a tiger by the man in the chair. Not for a moment did he lose sight of her.

"You must help me. I will go back to the mark when all is over," she exclaimed, halting before the man. "I have so much at stake. If he comes back with his proof I can face him and there will be no telltale sign on my flesh. Can't you see, man?"

The dark-faced man only grinned.

"It was a bold stroke, sure enough," said he. "I wouldn't have thought of it. You are a shrewd woman."

"One has to be when everything is at stake. I am on the winning side now. We have the people with us. We have the 'unwritten law' with us as well and that is a power. Hutton Strong, his main lawyer, has promised to have him acquitted."

"But why—tell me—why did he shoot Kendall Gray?"

"He was my evil genius. He came North to persecute me. He was my persecutor, my traducer——"

"And for that he died?"

"Yes. It was justice. They are all saying that now. You can read that from Maine to California."

"And that will clear Hector Knight?"

"Certainly."

The little man was silent for a minute.

"I am sorry," he remarked as he suddenly rose. "If this Yankee, Quincy Weston, comes back to this city, all the lawyers

(Continued on page eleven.)

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The fish liar will soon be on deck again.

It's a good thing not to be a "good thing."

Many a man says "How do you do?" just before doing you.

Nothing is more unsatisfactory than vanity—in others.

Lots of lazy men would kick if they were compelled to do nothing.

It takes two to make a match—and a divorce judge to ignite it.

Some people are too conscientious to preach what they practice.

A word to the wise may be sufficient—but it depends on the word.

Trying to live up to his good reputation has kept many a man poor.

Put yourself in your neighbor's place and you would stop abusing him.

Never use hard words—especially if you are unable to pronounce them.

Most of the good things in life come to those who wait on themselves.

And the early bird sometimes gets it where the giraffe got the extension.

Foraker adds to the popularity of Roosevelt every time he opens his mouth.

You may have observed that a good practical joke is always on the other fellow.

Advocates of home industries are not always industrious when they are at home.

And many a man acquires the upper hand by dealing it from the bottom of the deck.

Many a dairyman's idea of pure milk is the kind from which all cream has been removed.

If a man has nothing to do and nowhere to go he can afford to sit down and argue with a woman.

Don't sit around and wait for opportunity to knock at your door. Go and knock on the door of opportunity.

Thaw discovered that the gilding supplied by his eloquent attorney would not stand the Jerome acid test.

Fond mothers who hope to retain the confidence of their sons should get a book and learn the baseball dope.

A woman invariably tells a small boy to hurry back when she sends him on an errand—but what's the use?

Could Thaw and his wife stand a new trial when the public had grown so indifferent that their pictures were published only every other day?

Considering the fact that he talks so much President Roosevelt should please his enemies, but he doesn't. This must be on account of what he says.

HOUSE OF THE MIDNIGHT SOUND.

By J. BRECKENRIDGE ELLIS.

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CHAPTER XIII.

THE FLASH OF LIGHT.

For a brief space there was silence in the lawyer's office.

Then Judge Havens exploded, "Mr. Zellers, do you mean to tell us that you have discovered who is the murderer of Washington Talbot?"

"I do."

"After his identity has remained an impenetrable mystery for forty years?"

"Exactly so."

"Mr. Zellers," said the judge in a low voice, bending forward and looking intently into the detective's gray eyes, "who is it—"

"You are a Kentuckian?" asked Keeneyes.

"Sir, I am."

"And you have never suspected who killed Washington Talbot?"

"Why should the fact that I am a Kentuckian——"

"Gentlemen," said Keeneyes rising. "I would rather not go farther into that at present.

"I do not care to incriminate people until I can produce positive proofs.

"If I am premature, it will precipitate failure.

"I ask you to come to the haunted house tonight at twelve o'clock and wait with me there one hour.

"When the town clock strikes one I will show you the murderer.

"And I will show him to you so conclusively that the murderer himself will not think of denying that he is the murderer.

"You will admit that forty years leave clews rather dusty.

"It is important to place the criminal in such a position that he will readily confess what it might be difficult to prove.

"Therefore come at twelve tonight. And in the meantime, good-by, for I have much to do."

Keeneyes took his departure.

His statement that he had much to do had been no polite social fiction.

And yet his work puzzled Jansen Moore.

That young man had retained his room at the hotel, but he no longer shunned the detective; in fact, the detective needed his aid.

The detective's first care was to put a strong lock on the cellar door.

"What is that for?" asked Jansen Moore when Keeneyes nodded his satisfaction over the security of the iron plate.

"That," said Keeneyes succinctly, "is to lock."

Sometimes Jansen Moore found Keeneyes rather trying, but a recollection of past services always preserved him from an open show of revolt.

Having left the cellar door unlocked, Keeneyes next set to work to collect old iron.

He hired a spring wagon and with Jansen Moore drove about Goldenburg picking up old worn out stoves. Sometimes he got them for nothing; sometimes he paid a small price. In either case he was regarded with much curiosity by the householders.

At last he had a goodly heap of rusted iron in his front yard.

The wagon was returned to its owner.

"Now," said Keeneyes, "all this iron is to be carried into the cellar. Will you kindly lend a hand, Moore?"

When the old stoves had been carried down to the cellar, the two men were weary and hungry. Keeneyes treated himself to a dinner at Jansen Moore's hohtel, but he did not find it a distinct improvement over the restaurant. The string beans tasted like sour rags soaked in rinsing water and the ice cream resembled frozen batter. Keeneyes stuck his fork into the beefsteak, pulled it out with some difficulty and said with sadness, "This seems to call for a beef inquiry."

"Or inquest?" Jansen Moore ventured.

"No, sir," said Keeneyes, "there is no doubt as to what he died of; a simple case of old age, my dear fellow."

"The chicken, at least," said Moore, "is not so easily autopsied."

"Alas!" said Keeneyes, shaking his head, "the poor chicken seems scarcely dead yet."

Keeneyes insisted on paying the bill, and as he laid his dollar on the ledge before the wicker window he said, "Madam, your price is heavy, and I have a biscuit in my stomach that matches it."

The lady with the long face asked sharply, "Didn't the dinner suit you?"

"Ah," said Keeneyes, lifting his hat, "you think ill of me."

Once more back in the desolate house, Keeneyes set to work to arrange a complicated piece of machinery out of his rusty stoves and iron weights. Under his direction Jansen Moore brought from the haunted bed chamber the wood framework under which the graphophone had been hidden.

Other heavy beams were dragged down to the cellar.

Coatless and vestless, the perspiring men worked with iron, lumber and ropes.

At last the thing was done, much to Jansen Moore's mystification.

A shapeless mass of battered iron and disreputable parts of stoves was poised in the air, supported by the wooden uprights and cross-pieces.

Keeneyes rubbed his hands with satisfaction.

"But what is it all about?" Moore ventured.

"My dear boy," said the detective patronizingly, "don't you see that we have suspended a mass of immense weight in midair?"

"Of course, I see that."

"And that it is hanging directly over the mouth of the drainpipe?"

"Yes, if it fell it would certainly stop up the tile."

Keeneyes chuckled. "Moore, you are right. It certainly would. Now look at this rope. Watch me. See: I tie it to this beam. Observe the beam. Do you note?"

"Note what?"

"Note what? Why, my dear boy, note that if this beam were to give way, the whole pile of iron would come crashing down upon the mouth of the drainpipe."

"But that beam won't fall."

"Wouldn't it if I pulled this rope?"

"Oh, of course, if you pulled the rope it would."

"Well, that is exactly what I want you to do this night."

"Pull the rope?"

"Exactly. Mark you, Moore, I may not have another chance to explain this to you, for there is still much to do. So give me your utmost attention. Are you listening?"

"Of course, I am," said Moore impatiently.

"Of course, you are, hey? Well, well; now if any slip comes tonight it will be through you, I foresee that. Listen, then. I expect the murderer of Washington Talbot to come into this cellar tonight. I will ask you to lie in wait in the drainpipe, with that expectation. I will assign Mr. Allen the duty of locking the cellar door. Judge Haven and I will follow the murderer into this cellar. I will shout 'Gludgers,' you will pull the rope. You understand? The murderer will be caught in a trap. The door will be locked behind him, the mass of iron will prevent his escape through the drainpipe to the exit. You see? We will seize and overpower him."

"But," said Jansen Moore, "why go to all this labor for nothing?"

"For nothing?" echoed Keeneyes with displeasure.

"Why, yes, Mr. Zellers; we are four men against one. If the murderer is coming into this cellar why couldn't one of us standing at this tiling, defend that exit? Another at the door could defend it."

"If those men were I," said Keeneyes severely, "or, to put it in other words, if I could be each of the four men, what you say is true. But in this affair I am obliged to depend upon men who are not myself. Do you remember when you were playing ghost, I told you not to appear till I spoke the word 'gludgers?' Didn't you appear? Did I ever speak the word 'gludgers?' I never did. It is these little things——"

"Why didn't you tell me," said Moore, defending himself, "that you had a graphophone hidden under that contraption?"

Keeneyes did not immediately reply. He stood staring at Moore as if the latter had in reality turned into a ghost.

The lamplight glistened on the glazed eyes of the detective.

Such a glassy stare in the gloomy cellar with the ghostly mass of iron swinging in the air overawed Jansen Moore.

"Mr. Zellers!" he cried in alarm. "What's the matter?"

Keeneyes started, an expression came back to his countenance. His face lighted up. His eyes sparkled. "Moore!" he almost shouted, "I have solved the mystery of the midnight sound!"

"What!"

"Yes. When you spoke the word 'graphophone, something like a flash of lightning darted through my brain. What do you think it was?"

"I can't imagine," said Moore uneasily.

"It was a stupendous thought, that's what it was," cried Keeneyes triumphantly. "Anybody else's brain might well have been paralyzed by it. Yes, I know now what makes that sound at midnight. I see it all. Sometimes I fathom great mysteries by logical deductions, or as I call them in my own peculiar style, 'reasonable inferences.

"Again I reach the gist of the matter all in a flash of intuition.

"Everything I have done has been leading up to this stupendous discovery.

"Now the flash has come.

"Had it come sooner, we would have been spared much of our labor; still, I do not regret so much work, needless though it now proves.

"Perhaps flashes of divine genius would not come had not arduous toil preceded."

"But what is your flash?" cried Jansen Moore in desperation. "And what divine genius do you mean?"

"I will show you," said Keeneyes, still breathless with excitement. "Let us hurry upstairs and get that graphophone; and bring the hammer with you."

CHAPTER XIV.

KEENEYES MAKES THE MIDNIGHT SOUND.

Keeneyes went from the cellar to the second story in great elation.

Jansen Moore followed in bewilderment.

Keeneyes placed the graphophone upon his one chair, steadied it, put on a blank record and set the wheels to whirring.

"Now," he shouted to Jansen Moore, "begin hammering upon the floor, not too hard, at this interval: one—two—three."

Jansen Moore obeyed.

As the blank record spun around the cylinder there came the thud—thud—thud of Moore's hammer upon the bare floor.

It was not very long before the blank record was spun out.

"That will do," said Keeneyes with a nod.

"Shall I keep on hammering?" inquired Jansen Moore.

"Not unless it is for your own pleasure," said Keeneyes, putting away the other records and reversing the machine.

"It's no pleasure to me," said Moore a trifle stiffly.

"Then I wouldn't keep it up," said Keeneyes; "it is noisy."

Jansen Moore did not reply.

"See here, Moore," said Keeneyes suddenly, "don't you know why I set you to hammering on the floor?"

"No, I don't."

"Why, man alive! wasn't I taking the sound on my blank record?"

"How did I know it was a blank record? You never tell me anything in advance," said Moore in justification.

"I never tell anything? But, my dear fellow, I don't like to tell a man that his eyes are open; he might naturally retort that he sees that. I put this graphophone into motion, but it did not sing you a nasal song or deliver you a military band with ramt tump, tump, tumps, supposed to represent the booming of the big drum. It was silent. Therefore it was set with a blank record."

"But why did you want to take down the sound of this hammer?" expostulated Jansen Moore. "Is the sound of this hammer in any way different from that of any other hammer?"

"By no means," returned Keeneyes.

He lifted up the graphophone and held it in his arms.

"Is this hammer in any way connected with the mystery of the midnight sound?"

"Hitherto there has been been no connection; but oftentimes when things are unconnected, I connect them. It is a method I commend to you. If you know one thing and don't know another, get them connected, then step over from the known into the unknown. Come, and I will show you."

Keeneyes carried the graphophone into the next room.

Jansen Moore followed.

The detective went to the staircase and sank down upon his knees at the top of the stairs.

Still upon his knees, he wriggled down a few steps and placed the graphophone carefully on the top step.

"Moore," said Keeneyes, "do you know how to manipulate a graphophone?"

"Certainly I do," said Moore.

"Very well. Now please follow my directions implicitly. They are as follows: I want you to take my place, while I go into the next room. I want you to move this instrument from step to step until you come to the very bottom step. Set it to going in the meantime, and do not remove it from any one step until the hammer-sound has been repeated three times. Now, Moore, how many times will that make for each step?"

"Four thumps for each step."

"Why, good! You are apt. Then when the record is played out, wind up again and do it all over till every step sounds four times. Now, my friend, I trust you have gathered the flowers of my meaning," said Keeneyes jauntily.

"Yes, I've gathered 'em," said Moore grimly.

"Then pray inhale their sweetness and preserve them," said Keeneyes. He rose, dusted his knee with a dainty handkerchief and went back into his bedroom. He closed the door behind him.

Jansen Moore listened intently, but caught no sound from the adjoining chamber. What was the detective doing?

However, that was not Moore's affair. He set to work with the graphophone, and descended step by step, each one giving forth four raps.

Before Jansen Moore had gone down four steps, the picture of himself appeared to his mind so ludicrous that he laughed aloud.

However, as he descended lower, the work became more serious for it was tiresome.

Near the foot of the staircase his task assumed something sinister to his mind. It was as if he were dealing with spirit rappings.

The solemn thump—thump—thump—thump became ghostly in the semi-gloom.

At last every step had been sounded. With much relief Moore shouted this intelligence to the detective. The bedroom door opened.

"Was it satisfactory?" called Moore.

"It was entirely so," said Keeneyes cheerfully.

"Did you find out anything?"

"Yes. I found out all your trouble was useless. Now I must ask you to come into the bedroom."

Moore obeyed.

"Moore," said his companion, "you heard the midnight sound last night. Would you recognize it again?"

"Certainly I would."

"Good. Now I am going to try to reproduce it. Shut this door after me and seat yourself upon my cot and remain silent. If you hear a sound over yonder by the washstand, call to me. Now, pray mark me Moore; please do not get this wrong; I beseech you to attend to what I am saying;

the instant you hear that midnight sound, cry 'Gludgers!' "

"Very well," said Moore, who did not like to be treated like a little boy. Keeneyes left the room and Moore closed the door after him.

Then he took up his post on the cot and waited.

As from a remote distance he presently heard the graphophone at work with its hollow thump—thump—thump—thump.

The moments dragged by.

Suddenly there came the sound of mystery, the sound that hitherto had come only at midnight. It fell soft and muffled under or beside the washstand.

Jansen Moore, who had been listlessly following the faint beating upon the staircase, was so startled that his heart stood still.

Again came the mysterious sound as of an invisible presence in the room.

Jansen Moore cried, "I hear it, Mr. Zellers!" Then he bethought him, and shouted, "Gludgers!"

The beating on the staircase ceased.

Keeneyes appeared at the door. "I will ask you to kindly step this way," he said politely. He no longer expected anything from his friend but a willingness to serve. He resolved to honor this willingness and no longer chide his friend for the absence of ability.

"Moore," he said gently, when he had conducted him half down the flight of stairs, "will you have the goodness to hold this graphophone exactly in this position?" And the detective held the instrument against the inside wall, about four feet above the step. "It is rather heavy and it will be somewhat awkward, but if you would not object too much, I hope you may comply with this request."

"Of course," said the young man, "I will do anything you wish."

"Oh, thank you," said Keeneyes dryly.

Then the detective went back into the bedroom, having first touched the spring. He closed the door after him.

Jansen Moore held the graphophone tightly against the wall till the entire record was played out.

Then Keeneyes appeared at the head of the stairs. His face wore an expression of elation.

"Yes," he said, "we are both able to reproduce the mysterious sound. It is a little sharper than the original and it is not so prolonged, but it is a very successful imitation, very successful indeed. A thousand thanks, my dear fellow."

"Still," said Moore, "although we can make the mysterious sound, it does not tell us who makes the genuine one."

"Oh, I already know that. But I did not know exactly where the sound was made or the nature of it. Now we know that it is always produced half-way up the stairs on which Washington Talbot was murdered, and about four feet above the step. In a word, what we have been hearing is the fatal death-dealing blow that killed Washington Talbot forty years ago."

Moore stared incredulously.

"My dear Mr. Zellers," he expostulated, "you are superstitious."

Keeneyes smiled. "I do not think it, Moore. This is a scientific demonstration.

"Let us discuss it just a moment. Do you not think that for every heart in the world there is some other heart, could it be found? Do you not think that for every desire, perhaps I should qualify my term and say, for every natural desire, there is, somewhere, a natural means for its fulfillment? You agree with me, I am sure. Let us then proceed from the spiritual to the material world. Every material object when struck gives out a sound, audibly or inaudibly from the viewpoint of mortal ears. Now, my dear fellow, every tone of every object has an answering tone in some other object, if brought into proper relationship. To take a prosy example—one that you understand, my dear friend—you know that if you strike the coal bucket with the shovel that a vibration will at once respond from an open piano.

"But to pursue this matter into its recesses, have you not at times, I might say oftentimes, struck an object, or, let us say, merely trod upon a particular plank in the floor and been answered by the inarticulate cry of some remote object, say a vase, or picture frame, or even the quiver of a bracket?

"It is a reasonable inference, therefore, that every material object may be made to give forth a vibration or sound by our smiting another object, provided, of course, that its soul's partner, so to speak, is in exactly the right spot."

"This is vague," remarked Jansen Moore.

"Then I will make it concrete," said Keeneyes with much enjoyment. "As soon as I heard the midnight sound, or at least, the second time I heard it, I knew it could not be produced by any presence in the bedroom. How then came it into the room? Thus, that particular plank under the washstand was made to give out an echo whenever its soul's partner, so to speak, was smitten. Where was that intimate plank of its echoing fibre? I investigated. It was in vain. Suddenly it occurred to me that the staircase where the murder had been committed contained the complement of that echoing plank. By means of the graphophone it could be elucidated. And we have elucidated it."

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"What you say is ingenuous," said Moore, "but not convincing."

"Very well," said Keeneyes, "perhaps you can account for the midnight sound? What logic can you produce——"

"But, Mr. Zellers," said Moore emphatically, "if all the logic in the world were heaped and piled to prove your point, I could not be convinced that a sound made forty years ago is still repeated exactly at one o'clock every night in a deserted house."

Keeneyes burst out laughing. "My dear Moore," he cried, "my dear fellow, let us go to supper, and let us hope that we will be handed out a better meal than was served to us at high noon!"

CHAPTER XV.

ONCE MORE, THE MIDNIGHT SOUND.

At twelve o'clock, midnight, Keeneyes stood waiting at the front gate of the "Washington Talbot property," as the old settlers still called Judge Havens' premises.

Jansen Moore was waiting at the front door.

Almost punctually to the moment two men came up the sidewalk and paused at the gate; they were Judge Havens and his friend Jack Allen.

"Come in, gentlemen," said Keeneyes in a low voice, "and make as little noise as possible. You have asked me who murdered Washington Talbot some forty years ago. I will presently show you. Are you both armed?"

"We are," said the judge.

"I do not know that force will be called for," remarked the detective, "but if so, it is well to be ready. Come into the house."

They entered the bare front room and Jansen Moore was introduced. "A friend of mine who can be trusted," said Keeneyes; "he is willing. Let us go upstairs."

They ascended.

"This, gentlemen," pursued the detective, "is the haunted bed chamber."

"Yes," said Jack Allen. "I guess I ought to know that well enough—I've slept here many times!"

"And the midnight sound always came from where yonder washstand is placed."

"Yes, it did."

"Pray excuse me just a moment, gentlemen," said Keeneyes; "Moore, do the civilities till I come back, will you?"

Keeneyes went out, closing the door behind him. The stairway was lighted by electricity, as was the first story. Keeneyes carried his graphophone to the spot of vibration above the staircase and touched the spring. When the sound of only one hammer-stroke had been given forth he checked the wheels and replaced his instrument on the hall floor. The bedroom door opened and Judge Havens looked out.

"Did you hear that mysterious midnight sound?" called Keeneyes.

Jack Allen answered in an eager affirmative.

"I made it," said Keeneyes serenely. "Anybody can make it if he only knows how, hey, Moore?"

"That's right," Moore nodded. Keeneyes then went into the same elaborate explanation which he had delivered to Jansen Moore.

"That's all well enough," said Jack Allen, "but if we grant that somebody produces the sound by knocking on the wall over the particular step, the question is who does it?"

"Yes, sir," said the judge, pulling his goatee; "it isn't a consideration of whether or not you or I can make that sound, but the point is, who does make it?"

"Easily answered," said Keeneyes; "the man who murdered Washington Talbot, whom I shall presently show you."

"Then again," said Allen argumentatively, "why does he make it?"

"Easily explained," said Keeneyes; "for forty years he has brooded over his crime. During the past few years it has taken complete possession of him, particularly when he is asleep. He is irresistibly drawn to this house and to the fatal spot where the deed was committed.

"When the night is dark, just as it was forty years ago at the commission of the deed, his being is unconsciously brought here by self-magnetism. It is a case of autohypnosis.

"He comes here just as he came forty years ago.

"He lives over that awful night.

"He creeps to the staircase where to all intents and purposes Washington Talbot is still waiting to be killed.

"This barefooted murderer slips up the stairs. He is following Washington Talbot up, up, up.

"Now he is half-way up the flight. He will wait no longer. Talbot might escape.

"Suddenly the murderer deals Talbot a blow on the head. But, as a matter of fact, there is no flesh-and-blood head of Washington Talbot to receive the blow, only a ghostly thought-head through which the blow passes as through air.

"The blow falls against the wooden wall. That produces the midnight sound. The plank under the washstand responds to the thud upon its soul's partner, so to speak, namely, that plank of answering fibre in the staircase wall.

"Then what does our murderer do? Perhaps the sound of the blow wakes him up. In that case he will flee with noiseless feet. If he is not awakened he will act as he did forty years ago. How that was I do not know, though I can imagine. No matter. The mystery of the midnight sound is explained."

"By no means! by no means!" cried Jack Allen. "How could a man get into this house when every door and window was made fast? Never at morning or night, during our occupancy of this house, was there ever the least sign of any tampering of the locks."

"Locks?" echoed Keeneyes. "Pooh!"

"Well," retorted Allen argumentatively, "if no locks were altered, how could a material, flesh-and-blood murderer get into this house?"

"Just as he got into it forty years ago, namely, through the cellar."

Judge Havens spoke up. "The cellar window is not large enough to admit the passage of a man's body; besides it is boarded up."

"The window? Nonsense! Our murderer comes in through the floor."

"Ah! you mean through the drainpipe?"

"Why, of course I mean the drainpipe. Where else? Excuse me a moment, gentlemen, while I turn off all the electric lights for the time draws near for our murderer to come."

Presently the house was in absolute darkness save for the bedroom in which the coal-oil lamp burned, turned down low.

"Now," said Keeneyes, "pray give me your earnest attention while I outline our immediate course of action.

"It is now half-past twelve. In about fifteen minutes, I judge, our interesting murderer will emerge from the drainpipe into the dark cellar.

"He will creep upstairs to the fatal spot on the staircase.

"Moore and I have built a trap over the mouth of the drainpipe.

"As soon as the murderer is safely out of the cellar, I want you, Moore, to creep into the cellar, wiggle yourself down into that drainpipe, drawing the end of the trap rope with you, and lie there in wait till you hear me shout 'Gludgers.' Then you will pull the rope. That will cause the mass of iron to fall over the mouth of the drainpipe, and the murderer's escape will be checked in that direction. Do you understand this, Moore? Would you like for me to repeat it?"

"That's easy," said Moore impatiently. "Besides, you had already told me this."

Keeneyes looked doubtfully at his willing friend and turned with a sigh to Jack Allen. "As soon as our murderer has smitten the wall, in his dream-thought of killing Talbot, we three who will be at the head of the stairs, will watch him by means of my dark lantern. If the flashing of the light wakes him from his somnambulistic orgy, so to speak, he will flee toward the cellar. We will follow, and I will undertake to capture him with the assistance of Judge Havens. But it may be that the murderer will not wake up; in that case one cannot depend upon his actions. He may suddenly turn and try to get out of the cellar. Now, Mr. Allen, I shall ask you not to come into that cellar, but to follow us to it and to lock us in with the murderer."

"My dear sir!" protested Judge Havens.

"You will do this, will you, Mr. Allen?"

"With great pleasure," said Allen promptly.

"I do not wish to be locked in with that murderer," said the judge with decision.

"It will have to be," said the detective conclusively. "I will tell you why. The murderer's flight must be checked. With the door and drainpipe both closed against him he will see the folly of trying to escape, and he will confess. A confession is very important, for you will notice that I am acting altogether upon reasonable inferences furnished by my own intellect. I ask Mr. Allen to lock the cellar door on the outside because if he were on the inside he would be at a painful disadvantage at the top of the stairs. He would fumble at the lock. He would miss the keyhole. The murderer would brush him away like a fly; possibly like a dead fly. I could lock that door on the inside in such condition, but I dare not trust any other man to do it. Now, being on the other side of the door, Mr. Allen will be comparatively calm. He will feel that though fastening up his friends with the murderer he is fastening himself out."

"That's right," said Allen cheerfully, "I will undertake to carry out my part all right."

"Thank you," said Keeneyes gravely. "Now, Moore, the time has come. Slip downstairs and hide in the back room. Presently you will hear a stealthy form slip up from the cellar. Your heart will not fail you?"

"It will not," said Moore bravely.

"You are willing," Keeneyes conceded. "Then when the murderer is safely out of the room, do you steal down to the cellar, get into the drainpipe, rope in hand, and wait there to jerk the rope the instant I cry 'Gludgers.' "

"What does 'Gludgers' mean, Mr. Zellers?"

"And then you pull the rope hard. Go now, Moore. It is no matter what 'Gludgers' means. You have not time to lose."

Jansen Moore, who had removed his shoes and socks, stole out into the darkness of the empty house.

"Gentlemen," whispered Keeneyes, "let us not speak another word. The time has come to act."

Keeneyes drew off his shoes, motioning to the two men to do likewise.

Then he lit his dark lantern and placed it upon his cot with the light directed toward his closed door.

Judge Havens, rather nervous at the prospect of being fastened up in a dark cellar with a murderer of forty years standing, breathed hard and tugged uneasily at his goatee as if ringing for courage.

Absolute silence reigned in the haunted house.

Finally Jack Allen drew forth his watch, for it seemed to him that hours must have passed.

Keeneyes held up a warning hand.

Allen and Judge Havens started with a shiver as the silence was jarred into waves of echoing sound by the striking of the town clock.

One o'clock!

As in ghostly response there came a dead,

(Continued on page eleven.)

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"That air be a picter uv th' President, Hiram," answered Mrs. H.

"Gosh all hemlock!" exclaimed the old man excitedly. "Hes he bin an' got cured uv somethin', too?"

Already Holds Office.

When she had finished her remarks relative to something he had done that did not meet her approval, he spoke.

"I don't see why you should want woman suffrage," he said. "You already hold office."

"What office?" she demanded.

"Speaker of the house," he replied

Piscatorial.

An angler was asked up in Mich.
As to when he would go out to fich.
An inscrutable smile
Decked his face a short while;
Then he said, "I shall go when I wich."

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Brown—You don't say?

Green—Fact. I married the widow of a man who was strung up for horse stealing.

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JOKES AND

When the Truth Comes Out.

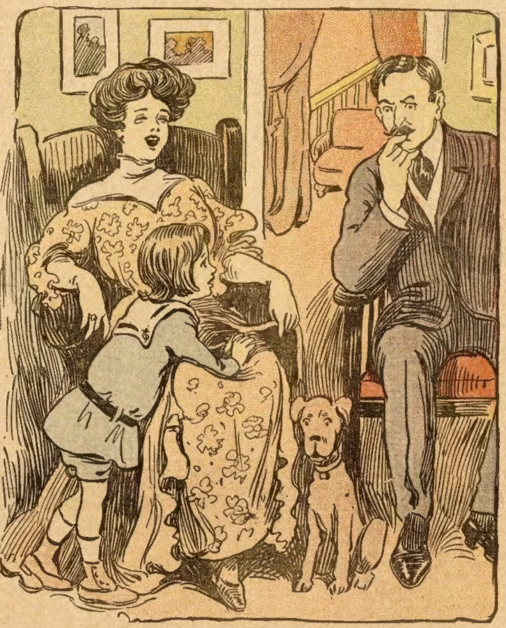
"Do you know," remarked Mrs. Newed. "I can't believe a word my husband says any more."

"That's too bad," rejoined Mrs. Oldwed. "Doesn't he ever talk in his sleep?"

Not a Prize Beauty.

Newed—Yes. I got my wife through a matrimonial agency. We were engaged before we met.

Oldham—That is quite evident. But couldn't you buy her off after the meeting?



Papa—I never told lies when I was a boy, Willie.
Willie—When did you begin, papa?

Sure Sign.

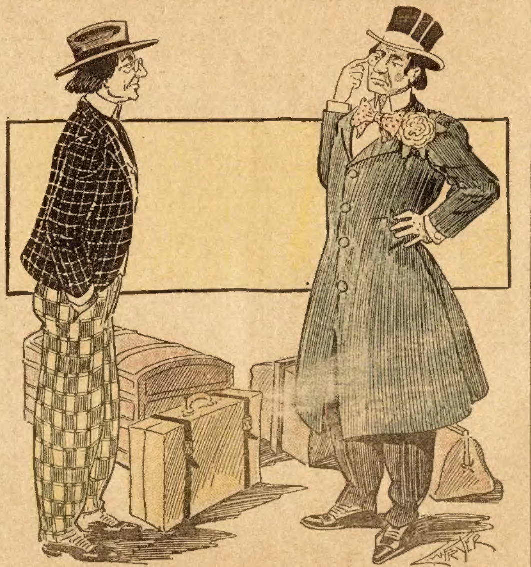
"I declare, Gladys is getting prettier every day."

"You only think that because every time she comes out she has uglier bulldog."

Unkind.

Clarence—When I saw how big a fish I had hooked, I tell you I caught my breath!

Miss Cunning—You had some bait for that along, too, had you?



Successful Actor (disapprovingly)—My dear fellow, surely that's a very short coat you are wearing?
The Seedy One—What's the odds? It'll be long enough before I get another.

IN A SHADOW

Inveterate Tea Drinker Feared Paralysis.

Steady use of either tea or coffee often produces alarming symptoms as the poison (caffeine) contained in these beverages acts with more potency in some persons than in others.

"I was never a coffee drinker," writes an Ill. woman, "but a tea drinker. I was very nervous, had frequent spells of sick headache and heart trouble, and was subject at times to severe attacks of bilious colic.

"No end of sleepless nights—would have spells at night when my right side would get numb and tingle like a thousand needles were pricking my flesh. At times I could hardly put my tongue out of my mouth and my right eye and ear were affected.

"The doctors told me I was liable to become paralyzed at any time, so I was in constant dread. I took medicine of various doctors and no end of patent medicine—all to no good.

"The doctors told me to quit using tea, but I thought I could not live without it—that it was my only stay, I had been a tea drinker for twenty-five years; was under the doctor's care for fifteen.

"About six months ago I finally quit tea and commenced to drink Postum.

"I have never had one spell of sick-headache since and only one light attack of bilious colic. Have quit having those numb spells at night, sleep well and my heart is getting stronger all the time. Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich. Read the little book, "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs. "There's a Reason."

Satisfactory.

The stern but wealthy parent met the young man at the front door.

"Here," he growled, "is where I give your attentions to my daughter a check."

"All right, old man," replied the youth calmly. "Make the check for $1,000 and it will be perfectly satisfactory to me."

My Grocer.

He claims his goods are all first class—
No better have I eaten.
I told him that I'd found, alas,
His eggs could not be beaten!

Just a Jingle.

Dogs seldom wear their own pants,
Which fact lays them open to scorn.
No nephew or niece cares for ants,
And a cow never blows her own horn.

Alas, Alas!

I've an utter contempt for riches, mind,
For dollars and bonds are deeds,
But, alas, my contempt is not the kind
Familiarity breeds!

A Dainty Little Maid.

Every one ought to have her. She is dressed in pretty colors and changes the color of her skirt herself when it is going to rain. She indicates when it is wise to take an umbrella or when you can do without. She is the simplest and best of barometers. She is an ornament, a good seller for agents, a pretty gift, a good business souvenir and useful to any one. She or one of her sisters comes postpaid with full directions for only 10 cents. W. P. Randolph & Co., 78 Dearborn St., Chicago.

Ways That Are Dark.

"Give me a kiss?" he begged.

"No," she protested. "I can't see it in that light."

Being a resourceful young man, he turned down the light and got busy.

As to Skeletons.

His Wife—They say that the family next door have a skeleton in their closet.

Her Husband—Well, that is better than letting it run around loose.

The Probable Reason.

"I wonder why that Miss Wrinkles always wears a veil?"

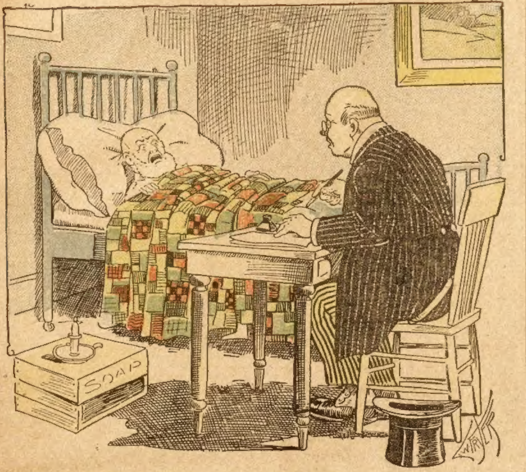
"Guess she has not the face to go without it."

Ladies, Preserve Your Youthful Appearance.

Madame Mignette's Beauty Cream and Skin Food removes every defect, spot, freckle, pimple, blemish or wrinkle, leaving the skin soft, clear and smooth. It is perfectly harmless and will not injure the most delicate skin. It preserves and brings back the youthful glow to the face and ruddiness to the cheeks, preserving it in this condition until extreme old age. This preparation has been used for years and hundreds are now using it and are more than delighted with the results.

Send us ten (10) cents for formula which you can have filled at any drug store at a very small cost. Do not delay, but write at once. Box 491, Blairsville, Pa.

JOLLITY



The Lawyer (drafting Mr. Snarler's last will and testament)—Oh, but if I may make a suggestion; don't you——

Mr. Snarler—Hang it all, who's dying—you or me, eh?

Merely a Theory.

"Of course, I don't know," began the sarcastic boarder, "but it strikes me this chicken——"

"Now, what's the matter with the chicken?" interrupted the landlady.

"Oh, nothing," answered the s. b., "only it is evidently the offspring of a hard-boiled egg.'

His Point of View

Patient (who had met with an accident)—Is it a bad fracture, Doctor?

Doctor (a surgical enthusiast)—Bad? Why it's beautiful, sir, beautiful! The bone is broken in no fewer than thirteen places!

Encouraging Her.

Stationer—What do you do with all the lead pencils you buy, Mr. Smith? You average about three a day.

Mr. Smith—Oh, that's all right. My wife is taking whittling lessons.

Tommy's Idea of It.

W'en my pop talks of Standard Oil
It makes my heart beat faster,
Fur fear I'll git some, 'cause I know
The standard oil is castor.

The Reason.

Miss Smith—Why do some people insist on talking about their neighbors?

Miss Quick—Because they take it for granted that their neighbors are talking about them and want to make sure of getting even.

Be Genial

That he who laughs last laughs best
We're often told, but I'm
Quite sure it's best to laugh and jest
First, last and all the time.

Terrible Fate.

"Yes, Katharine, the young man I have accepted has sandy hair."

"Indeed!"

"And when he is angry you should just hear him grit his teeth."

"My!"

"And, above all, he has plenty of dust."

"Gracious! I don't think I would care for that kind of a husband. Why, if it rained on him he might turn into a mud pie."

Little Too Much.

Magistrate—What's the charge against this man, officer?

Policeman—Creating a disturbance, your honor.

Magistrate—He created a disturbance on your beat last night, did he?

Policeman—Sure he did. He made so much noise he woke me up.

What He Wanted.

Mr. Hayrix (in swell restaurant)—Kin I git my dinner here, mister?

Waiter—Certaintly, sir. Will you have table d'hote or a la carte?

Mr. Hayrix—Well, yew may gimme a leetle of both—an' be shore an' put plenty uv gravy on it.

Caught in a Misstatement.

Homely Lecturer—Women, my friends, are invariably hard to please.

Voice (in the audience)—One moment, please. Are you married?

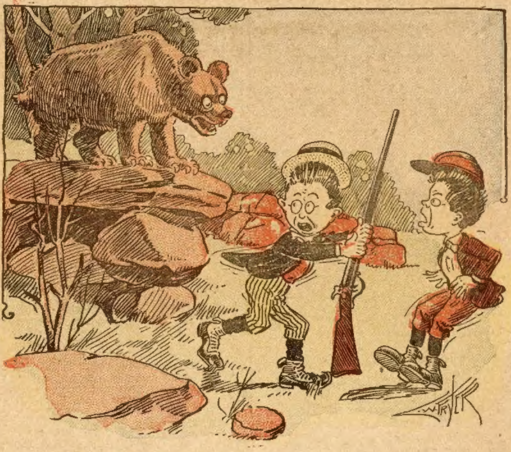
Homely Lecturer (irritably)—Yes, sir, I am.

Voice—Is your wife happy?

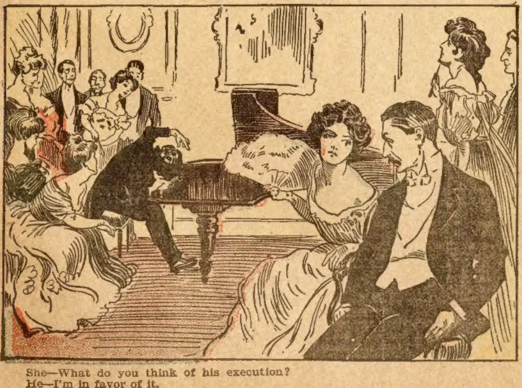
Lecturer (proudly and indignantly)—Yes, sir, she is.

Voice—Then, sir, you're a liar.

NOT IN HIS LINE.



"You shoot him, Billy. I only shoot rabbits."



She—What do you think of his execution?
He—I'm in favor of it.

Still a Rounder.

Mrs. A—You should, indeed, be pleased that you have an all-around good fellow for a husband.

Mrs. Z—Hardly. Why, he is never at home.

Mrs. Z—Where is he?

Mrs. Z—Why, "all around."

Good Tip.

"Do you think I can reach the heart of the haughty beauty?" sighed the sentimental youth with the guitar under his arm.

"Better try tunneling, old man," advised his friend.

"Tunneling?"

"Yes, I heard her say you were a great bore."

Final Sweep.

Merchant—Yes, we are in need of a janitor. Where were you employed last?

Applicant—In a bank, sir.

Merchant—Did you clean it out?

Applicant—No, sir. The cashier did that.

Pertinent Query.

"There are but seven real jokes in the world, you know," remarked the humorist.

"How is it," queried the man behind the blue pencil, "that you never happened upon any of them?"

AGENTS WANTED

Nearly all the readers of THE LEDGER will find these advertisements of interest to them. There will be found among them some excellent chances of making money by selling goods to friends, neighbors and others. Those seeking such an opportunity either as a regular or temporary occupation, should write the advertisers whose offers follow.

AGENTS WANTED
200 Per Cent Profit. Sell our Big $1.00 bottle Sarsaparilla for 85 cts. Best Seller Finest Medicine. Complies With Pure Drug Law. Everyone buys. Write now for terms
F. R. GREENE, 27 Lake St., Chicago

$41.00 per Week and Expenses to man with rig to introduce our Poultry Goods. Eureka Manufacturing Co., Dept. L, Navasota, Tex.

AGENTS, CREDIT, Perfumes, Flavors, etc. Big profits. Express Paid. Terms Free. HERBENE AGENCY CO., Box 282, Sta'n L, New York

SELL JEWELRY on time, to country merchants. Our salesmen make $500 every month. Write for proposition to a few good men. Address G. BARTON, Sales Mgr., Box L 97, CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA

SELL TOBACCO AND CIGARS. Locally or traveling. Salary or commission. Full time or side line. Steady work. Good pay. Promotion. Address MOROTOCK TOBACCO WORKS, Box Q 18, DANVILLE, VA.

AGENTS PORTRAITS 35c, FRAMES 15c, sheet pictures 1c, stereoscopes 25c, views 1c. 30 days credit. Samples & Catalog Free. Consolidated Portrait Co., 290—20 W. Adams St., Chicago.

$75 Month and Expenses; no experience needed; position permanent; self-seller. PEASE MFG. CO., Station W, Cincinnati, O.

$36 A WEEK AND EXPENSES TO MEN with rigs to introduce our Poultry Goods. JAVELLE CO., Dept. 29, PARSONS, Kansas

$1.00 AN HOUR Introducing Electric Combs, Brushes, and other Fast Sellers. Samples Free to Good Agents. Dr. C. L. HULL, 1431 Penn Ave., PITTSBURG, PA.

$25 PER WEEK AND TRAVELING EXPENSES paid salesmen to sell goods to dealers; experience unnecessary. PURITY D. C. CO., Chicago

$80 A MONTH Expenses advanced. District Managers, men or women, to travel and leave samples at stores. Address PEOPLE'S SUPPLY CO., Dept. H, 30 Plymouth Place, CHICAGO

$100 A MONTH and traveling expenses paid men to place Pepto-Protein (for stock and poultry) with dealers. Experience unnecessary. *Expenses advanced.* A. DAREL CO., PARSONS, Kansas.

PICTURE AGENTS Large 24 x 28 Framed Wall Pictures cost 38c complete, sell for 98c easy. 120 subjects. Send stamp for catalogue. Crayon portraits 45c. Address PICTURE CO. DEPT. D WAYNE, ILL.

AUTOMATIC FISH HOOKS Catches two fish to common hook's one. Fish are caught by even touching bait. Write today for our ONE HOOK FREE offer. Agents wanted. Hawk Specialty Co., Dept. 40, Des Moines, Ia.

FAVORITE CAKE SPOON For stirring and mixing batter. Also useful as a skimmer and in many other ways. Sent with 4 other attractive novelties prepaid Free to Agents. Catalog Free. Dept. AL, HOUSEHOLD NOVELTY WORKS, 25 Randolph St., Chicago, Ill.

WANTED YOUNG MEN
BRAKEMAN, FIREMAN, ELECTRIC MOTORMAN, PORTERS. Experience unnecessary. Name position; 100 positions open. Inter. Railway Inst., Dept. A, Indianapolis, Ind.

Energetic Men Wanted
In every locality throughout the United States to advertise our goods, tacking up showcards on trees, fences and along roads; also distributing small advertising matter; commission or salary $83 per month and expenses $4 per day. Steady employment; no experience necessary. Write for particulars. Address WM. R. WARNER MEDICINE CO., London, Canada

I'LL HELP YOU MAKE MONEY
Wanted immediately, an honest, energetic man or woman in every town, to commence work at once. Experience unnecessary. Permanent employment and one of the most liberal big money-making propositions ever offered. $3 to $5 or more a day sure. Don't put it off. Write now for full particulars and expensive samples free. T. M. SAYMAN, 2138 Franklin Avenue, St. Louis, Mo.

'07 ARMAC MOTOR-CYCLES
Ready for immediate delivery. AGENTS wanted in all open territory. Send for Cata. and terms. 3 H.P., simple to operate; always reliable. Get your name on our mailing list.
ARMAC MOTOR CO., 472 CARROLL AVENUE, CHICAGO, ILL.

BIG MAIL FREE!
POST OFFICE
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DUPES OF DESTINY.

By WILLIAM WALLACE COOK.

Author of "A Round Trip to the Year 2000," "Adrift in the Unknown," "Marooned in 1492," "A Gift from Mars," "The Eighth Wonder," etc.

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Begun in No. 14, April 6. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ASSEMBLING FACTORY.

I allowed the bird to carry me whither it would, insisting only that it move at a lively rate. Mr. Zix had been dropped from my visiting list; one glimpse of his satanic face had caused me to forget all about Hapgood and the peril that overshadowed him.

The bird, as I afterward discovered, wheeled in frantic circles through the fog that rested upon the Imperial City. When it finally came to a fatigued halt, I found that we were roosting on a metal pipe which trailed toward me out of the haze and then trailed on into it again.

The hopeless feeling of a shipwrecked sailor, cast up on an inhospitable shore, was mine. One thing only I hoped for, and that was that I had circumvented the diabolical individual who had been the author of my misfortunes.

Climbing from the neck of the drooping glimgazzet I settled myself on the rounded surface of the tube and began searching my pockets for something which I could use as an instrument of defense. While going through my clothes I heard a hail afar off. It was the professor's voice and I gave immediate answer.

In a little time he came sailing toward me and caused his bird to hover within speaking distance.

"Was that your so-called Master in Chancery," he asked, "the mysterious person who had so much to do in bringing you and your friends to these regions?"

"He's the fellow!" I declared. "Is he coming this way, Professor?"

"I was sure of it!" I heard my companion murmur. "No," he added, raising his voice, "the Prime Minister did not offer pursuit. As soon as I could overhaul you he said we might return for an audience with the Queen."

"I couldn't go back there now on a bet," I answered decidedly. "My nerves are in tatters. Br-r-r! It gives me a chill just to look at that fellow."

"It's too bad, Nickerson," said the professor commiseratingly, "but I think I know exactly how you feel. The Prime Minister is often given a roving commission to go outside and investigate the work of the lupozinns. You and your friends must have encountered him on one of these journeys of inspection."

"What did he bring us here for?"

"That might have been a whim of his own or by order of the Queen. It will take us five minutes to get back to the palace. Do you think you will have recovered in that length of time?"

"It's doubtful, Professor. I don't think I was ever in such a taking before in my life."

"Nothing Mr. Zix may do can harm you. However, an opportunity is at hand for distracting your mind and bringing you back to a normal condition. We are above the Assembling Factory. I have the entree of the place and, if you wish, we will pay it a visit before returning to the palace."

"Anything," said I, grasping at his suggestion as at a straw.

"Then mount your glimgazzet and we will fly to the main entrance."

A pair of broad doors closed the main entrance, one of them bearing the metal placard: "Positively no admittance except on business." The legend was done in English, and I remarked upon it while my companion and I were hitching our glimgazzets to a post in front.

"English has been used exclusively in the Factory for the last fifty years," explained the professor. "Our tongue is more pliable than the Zurman and better supplied with technical terms."

A small hammer swung by a chain from one of the door panels. Stepping forward the professor grasped the hammer and struck a ringing blow. Almost instantly a bolt was shoved and a six-inch breach opened in the barrier. An office boy in an abbreviated toga appeared in the breach.

"Is Mr. Clotho in the office?" asked the professor, returning the boy's respectful nod of recognition with a gesture.

"He's out to lunch," was the reply.

"Mr. Lachesis will do."

"He's here," said the boy, pulling the door wide. "Step right in, Professor."

We were admitted to an anteroom containing a number of metal chairs and a small table for the use of the diminutive Cerberus of the threshold. The latter requested us to be seated and dived through a door marked "Lachesis, Director of Lots."

My roving eyes encountered three other doors, one labeled "Clotho, Director of Levies," another "Atropos, Director of Distribution," and the third, "Work Room—Keep Out!"

"To begin at the beginning," remarked the professor, "we should first have explored Mr. Clotho's department. He presides over the levies, and sees to it that the lupozinns are properly collected and piped into the assembling room. Mr. Lachesis, whom we are about to meet, has charge of the analyzing and the separating one from the other of various kinds of lupozinns, passing then along to Mr. Atropos who sees that they are properly forwarded to destination. During the late Russo-Japanese war the Russian demand for lupozinns was so heavy that Mr. Atropos was brought near to nervous prostration trying to supply it. I understand that Russia continues to call for more lupozinns than any other country on the face of the globe."

Just here the office boy returned and beckoned us into the private apartment of Mr. Lachesis. A man, evidently a workman, stood at the desk of the Director as we entered.

"The Number Thirteens are running low for the United States," the workman was saying, "and we're short on Tagalogs for the Philippines. There are more microbes in the Diplomatic tank, however, than we know what to do with."

"How are the other supplies?" queried the Director.

"Normal, sir."

"Then mix Diplomatics with Thirteens and Tagalogs, half and half, and have Atropos shoot them through. I think it'll answer all right."

The workman disappeared through a rear door and Mr. Lachesis whirled around in his chair. He was a thin man with square jaw, straight lips and determined eyes.

"Howdy, Professor?" said he, holding out his hand and favoring me with a side scrutiny.

After returning the greeting the professor presented me, and a grim smile hovered over the Director's face.

"Any friend of Markham's is a friend of mine," said Mr. Lachesis. "I have already heard of you, Mr. Nickerson. What is your will, Professor?" he added, shifting his eyes to my companion.

"I should like to show Mr. Nickerson through the Factory," the professor answered.

"You know the rules, of course," returned the Director, "but inasmuch as there is not the slightest possibility of either you or your alien friends ever leaving Zurma and spreading reports outside of our work here, you have carte blanche to do as you please. There is your pass," and the Director handed my companion a slip of metal about the size of a visiting card. "I am more than rushed just now and——"

Another workman hurried in.

"Shortage of Economics, sir," he reported breathlessly, "especially of the Strike variety. Sudden demands from Pennsylvania, St. Petersburg and Paris."

The Director leaned back in his chair and rubbed his chin.

"Open that Russo-Japanese tank," said he, finally, "and mix three to one with the Economics for Paris and St. Petersburg. For Pennsylvania, mix half-and-half with Diplomatics. I've been saving the War tank," he added, with a wink at the professor, "for Emperor William, but it's no use."

The office boy showed himself at that juncture with a bunch of metal telegrams. "Just came by wireless, sir," said he, as he dropped them on the Director's desk and disappeared.

"Thunder!" exclaimed Mr. Lachesis, reading the first one and blowing into the mouth of a speaking-tube. "That you, Skees?" he asked.

"Sure," came the answer.

"Roosevelt again," groaned the Director; "Bighorn Mountains, this time. Lupozinn him for once and see what effect it has on the bears." The Director dropped back in his chair. "Your President," he added wearily, "uses up more lupozinns than the Senate—and they have less effect. A million men of his stamp would put this Factory out of business."

Mr. Lachesis picked up another wireless message.

"Row on in Venezuela," he murmured. "Oh, splash!" and he dropped the metal slip into his waste basket. "It's not worth bothering with."

The professor and I could see that the Director was very, very busy, so we excused ourselves as he reached for the next telegram.

"There you have it, Nickerson," whispered the professor with a sad shake of the head as soon as we were again in the anteroom. "No event on the surface of our planet is too small, or too large, for these three Directors to dally with. The lupozinns are subtracted from the air of the Imperial City of Zurma, classified, sometimes mingled, and then shot into the various countries of the Outer World."

"There appears to be telegraphic communication between the center of the planet and the outside?" I observed.

"That mountain or radium again. It is full of electricity."

"Perhaps I could send a message——"

"Impossible, my dear Nickerson. Messages arrive from the Outer World, but it is physically impossible to send any."

"Who sends them from the outside?"

"Agents appointed by the Prime Minister." The professor threw open the door of the workroom. "We shall now," he added, "get a little closer to the modus operandi."

One of the operatives approached us hastily, but as hastily retired on being shown our pass from the Director.

What I saw was an immense room, half a mile long as the professor assured me, lined on each side with rows of great tanks. A bewildering network of pipes surrounded the tanks, some conducting the bacilli from the collecting hoppers and some connecting the vats one with another.

"These tanks are mustered under three heads," expounded the professor, "Social, Political and Commercial; these again are subdivided so that every event may properly be taken care of by the corresponding lupozinn. Here, for instance," he went on, stepping to a tank at which a Zurman was working, "is vat No. 98, in the Social Rank. It is partly filled with Thirteens, or bacilli that have a particular affinity for the number thirteen. The workman has opened a valve and Diplomatics are coming from the Political Rank and mingling with the Thirteens. An odd result will follow, if I am any prophet."

A strip of some transparent substance was set into the side of the tank from top to bottom. The workman, with the aid of a magnifying glass, was intently studying the interior and keeping track of the mixing process.

For a brief space I was almost too much overcome for words. It was a far cry from that tank of Thirteens to Springfield, Illinois, and the hotel where Gentleman Jim had met his fate, yet the two had been inseparably connected. Taking my handkerchief from my pocket I wiped away a silent tear.

"Does it arouse memories, Nickerson, sad memories?" murmured the professor.

"Yes, Professor," said I. "If not too much trouble I should like to look at the Horseshoe tank, the Skeleton Finger tank and the Rabbit's Foot tank."

"There are none of those here, Nickerson. They are among the class known as Repellers, and the lupozinns do not seize upon them with the avidity they manifest toward other material forms and immaterial forces. For instance, a piece of half-burned carbon from an arc lamp, a horse-chestnut and even a potato, used as a pocket piece, are distasteful to the lupozinn that works in the malady called rheumatism."

"Then they are really potent? There is something in talismans, after all?"

"Negatively, yes—in slight degree. They are weakly anti-toxic in their properties."

I turned to another part of the vast subject.

"How is the genus lupozinn separated into its various species?"

"By means of certain metals and gems for which they have an affinity," was my companion's prompt answer. "For instance, the prime attraction at the end of the tube supplying the Supernatural tanks—which includes the tank holding the Thirteens—is an immense fire opal——"

"I knew a man," I cut in eagerly, "who bought an opal in the morning and was killed by a manhole explosion in the afternoon. The lupozinns must be starving for opals!"

"Some of them. Pure gold, to pursue our theme farther, is the attraction for the Graft lupozinn, drawing it as infallibly as a candle draws a moth. Quicksilver diverts the Diplomatic lupozinns, and even crude petroleum, native coal, virgin copper and other commodities embrace quickly certain forms of the Trust lupozinn. Director Clotho makes the levies, they are automatically divided and subdivided. Director Lachesis apportions them and Director Atropos sees to it that they are forwarded to their proper destinations."

"There's the point!" I exclaimed. "How are the lupozinns forwarded to the outside of the planet?"

"There are millions of channels, my dear Nickerson. Your bergschrund and my Andean gorge are but two of the countless avenues through which evil reaches the Outer World. In addition to bottomless pits, volcanoes supply the Zurmans with vehicles for disseminating the germs, and even the Styx—which is my own name applied to the infernal river—carries a weight of woe to the Seven Seas. Highly ingenious, these Zurmans."

"This River Styx," said I; "where is it?"

"You are destined soon to make close acquaintance with the stream," Professor Markham replied, with a mysterious lift-

EXQUISITE LACE HAT, $1.84

The very latest Paris style for spring and summer, 1907. Bewitchingly chic and pretty. Possesses distinct city style and charming tone found only in choicest imported millinery. It is an exact copy of the original PARIS PATTERN HAT which cost $50 to make and import. Hand made on a silk wire frame in latest mushroom shape, with drooping brim, slightly raised on left side. Becoming to young or old. Facing and upper brim is overlaid prettily with an exquisite pattern of white oriental lace. The large, stylish bell crown is composed of dainty layers of white imported proxyline braid; outer brim covered with same material. Left side is beautifully embellished with a bow of pink taffeta ribbon, held with an elegant gilt ornament. Effectively applied at right brim, and lending supreme elegance to the hat, is a wreath of pink silk and velvet roses and foliage, drawn around crown and finished off at left side. At left brim is arranged a lovely white silk chiffon drape veil, extending to back, hanging gracefully with stunning effect over brim. The swell, stylish shape and rich trimming of this exquisite French hat is guaranteed to beat any country milliner's $5.00 hat, or no sale. The hat as described is very handsome but can be had in any staple color desired; lace and veil come in black or white only. White lace is oriental; black lace, Chantilly. SEND US 25c DEPOSIT, mention No. X200, state color of trimming desired, and we will send this elegant dress hat C. O. D. by express, subject to examination, you to pay the express agent the balance $1.59 and express charges if the hat pleases you, otherwise it will be returned at our expense. Order to-day or write for our big, free millinery catalog, which finely illustrates our complete line of ladies', misses' and children's hats at 95c up, and every article known to the millinery trade. START A MILLINERY STORE. If you have $25.00 to invest, you can open a business in your own home, and without experience earn from $15.00 to $50.00 a week. We instruct and advise you free. If interested, write for full particulars. Write at once, today.

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WANTED Men to learn barber trade. Splendid pay after few weeks with us. Positions or locations to start business always on file. Special inducements this season. Write nearest Branch, Moler System of Colleges, Chicago, Ill., St. Louis, Mo., Kansas City, Mo., Omaha, Neb., New Orleans, La., Atlanta, Ga., Cincinnati, O., Dallas or San Antonio, Tex.

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ing of the brows. "In fact, before many hours have passed——"

Just there he was interrupted by the terrific clanging of a bell in a distant part of the great room. Workmen rushed past us at top speed.

"What has happened?" I inquired excitedly.

"The alarm signifies that one of the tanks, unduly loaded with a certain class of lupozinns, has yielded to the pressure and burst. Corraling the bacilli is dangerous work for the Factory employes; since we are fortified against them, however, we may approach and watch the work of recovery."

Joining the tide of workmen we hastened forward with them. Then a terrible spectacle met our eyes. The surcharged tank of War lupozinns had been riven asunder, and as fast as the workmen drew near it they were smitten with a savage fever and fell upon each other with hammers, wrenches and bare fists.

Full half a hundred Zurmans, in the vicinity of the demoralized vat, were maiming and slaying each other like so many tigers. Yet, thanks to Professor Markham's precautions, no hostile influence played havoc with our own peace of mind.

With stern cries the three Directors raced toward us, dragging a funnel affixed to the end of a flexible tube. A great fan somewhere began sucking in the air at the funnel's mouth with a rasping inhalation that echoed loudly over the noise of combat.

"Out of the way, Nickerson!" warned the professor; "otherwise we shall be drawn into the emergency tank with the escaped lupozinns and the unhappy Zurmans."

In his haste to get out of the way, Professor Markham slipped and fell. When he sprang up, it was with a scared face.

"I had a flask of my own bacilli in my pocket," he whispered in my ear as he grabbed my arm frantically. "I broke it as I fell—its contents have been released—something is bound to happen now!"

With that he set off at wild speed, pulling me after him. We had taken perhaps fifty paces in the direction of safety when a terrific explosion shook the Factory walls and all but threw us from our feet.

A haze rolled over the establishment, heart-rending cries broke out of it, and the professor and I raced on, pallid with fear.

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* * *

The Unwritten Law.

(Continued from page five.)

in the universe cannot save you from the consequences of your secret."

"But I have lost the puma's head."

"If the man is not silenced you are lost, even if you have lost a thousand heads of the Amazonian cat."

Marice De Marne gasped, and her visitor seemed to enjoy her fears.

CHAPTER XV.
THE SELLING OF A SECRET.

And this specter had come back to plague her!

Marice De Marne had resolved to keep this secret from Hector Knight. She would not tell him of the visit of the man from Brazil; no, he should not hear of it from her lips.

The wages of sin is death, as much so now as in the early days of the takers of human life.

As for the man who had come back to tell her of the results of events in South America, he went from the house and sought another part of the city.

Marice went to her room and stood some time in front of her mirror and looked at the place where the mark had been. It was gone now and, thanks to old Padouche, the skin had healed and there was no scar to trouble her.

She did not know that the man who had been employed by Noble Knight to keep track of her had a secret to sell.

There was a ring at the door and Marice went down.

This man stood on the step and at sight of her he gave a little smile of satisfaction.

"Miss De Marne?"

With new fear in her heart Marice nodded and the man stepped inside.

In the light of the sumptuous parlor she turned upon him and looked him over from head to foot.

"I have come on a little business," said he, "and I am glad that I have found you alone."

"I am alone——"

"Good!" and the man took a seat without an invitation and looked into the girl's white face.

"I am Nicholas Bragg," he went on. "I am a private detective."

"Yes? Well, Mr. Bragg, Mr. Knight's attorneys are the proper persons to do business with. I have nothing to do with that detail."

The fellow crossed his legs and his manner was cool and insulting in the extreme.

Marice waited.

"I was out the other night and came across a little performance that both astonished and amazed me."

"I probably have nothing to do with your surprise and amazement."

"Pardon me, but you have a good deal to do with both. By the way, do you happen to know a person called Padouche?"

The face of the listening beauty went pale.

"I—I—that is——"

"I see that the name is not wholly unfamiliar to you," grinned the man. "Old Padouche is a marvelous man to some extent, and his peculiar trade seems to be increasing."

"I do not know the man. What manner of person is he?"

"Oh, he removes birthmarks and that sort of thing."

"But why have you come to me with this information? Do you think I have need of his services?"

"Not now, Miss De Marne."

"But I——"

"I think we might come to the real point. You were to see the old fellow some time ago. You had business with old Padouche."

The face of the girl flushed and she stepped back to a little stand in one corner of the room.

The keen eyes of her visitor followed her with the interest of a wild animal that watches every movement of its prey.

He saw one of her hands drop into a secret drawer of the stand and remain there.

"You need not take it out," said he, with his cool grin. "I am quite prepared for anything of that sort."

How impudent was this man! What a lot of devilishness he carried with him!

"You shall not insult me," said Marice through scornful lips. "I am quite able to take care of myself even though I am a woman."

"Very well. You will hear me through even though you hold death in your fair hand."

The silver-mounted revolver which Marice clutched did not drop back into the drawer, but she got a firmer grip on it.

"You went to see old Padouche," continued the man. "You had him try his practiced hand on yourself."

"I——"

"You, girl. I have dealt with your kind before. It's a part of my profession."

"You're a demon."

"And if I am I owe it to people like you."

Marice came toward him.

"What is it you want?"

"I want to sell my secret."

"Is that all?"

There was a smile on Marice's lips.

"You want to sell your secret, do you?" she went on. "How do I know that you haven't sold it broadcast to every buyer already?"

"You have my word that I have not."

"The word of a man I have never met before."

"Just as you please. If you don't care to buy there are others, the district attorney, for instance."

"That implacable monster?" cried Marice, paling again. "That man who knows no mercy, but who is willing to drag honor and virtue in the dust to satisfy what he terms the demands of outraged justice?"

"The same gentleman, and you don't seem to have a very high opinion of him."

"Go on," said the impatient beauty. "What is the secret you have to sell?"
the secret you have to sell?"

The girl had steeled herself for the worst.

"As I have before remarked," and the man seemed to delight in the torture he was giving, "I saw a strange performance at old Padouche's the other night. You paid him well, I hope, but he is a leech."

"What do you want?"

Marice for the moment forgot all about the weapon she had lifted from the drawer.

"Perhaps I should deal with Mrs. Deland," said the man. "She is the money part of this firm, I believe."

"Mrs. Burke-Deland is not at home tonight."

"With you then, miss. I want, say, a thousand dollars."

Marice seemed to gasp, yet if this would purchase the keeping of the secret it would be cheap at that.

"I haven't got that amount," she said as she debated for time. "You must come again."

"Can't, my dear. I must have the money now. Your friend Mrs. Deland is generous. She——"

"What assurance have I, even if I deal with you, that you will keep your part of the bargain? What assurance, too, that you will not fall into the hands of the district attorney?"

"My word, miss."

Should she buy this man's silence? Yet he had not divulged what he had more than hinted at. He had not told her that he knew about the obliteration of the puma's head.

"You will not buy?" and the speaker rose to his feet. "I can sell to those who will."

He was half-way to the door, but Marice noticed that he kept his face turned toward her.

"It's no bargain, then?"

Just then footsteps came up the outer steps and the door opened.

Mrs. Deland entered the room and, seeing the man confronting Marice, stopped suddenly and stared point blank into his face.

"I did not know, Marice, that you had a visitor?"

The man darted a quick look at the rich woman.

"You will do just as well," said he. "I came to transact my business with you, but not finding you in, I have been trying to trade with Miss De Marne."

"With you, Marice? What is this person's mission?"

With a cry Marice went toward her friend and halted at her side.

"That villain knows," she said, her voice dropped to a whisper. "He knows about the loss of the mark."

Julia Burke-Deland turned full upon Nicholas Bragg and her mien rose like a tiger's gorge.

"So you know? If you do go to Hutton Strong!" she exclaimed.

"Yes? To Hector Knight's lawyer? I think I could do better with the young man's father."

At this a loud cry rang from Marice's lips and she reeled from Mrs. Deland.

"To him? To Noble Knight? No, no! We must deal with this man."

And they did.

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* * *

House of the Midnight Sound.

(Continued from page seven.)

muffled sound from across the room. It was the mysterious midnight sound.

CHAPTER XVI.
KEENEYES CAUGHT IN HIS OWN TRAP.

As soon as the mysterious midnight sound smote upon their ears, coming from the position of the washstand, Keeneyes, who was already upon his feet, swiftly opened the door.

If Allen or Judge Havens expected the door to creak, that was because they were unacquainted with the detective's precautionary habits. As a matter of fact, the door gave forth no sound. As soon as it was open, the light from the dark lantern swept out and, having traversed the adjoining upstairs room, revealed the head of the staircase.

Keeneyes tiptoed to the staircase, motioning to the others to follow cautiously.

He looked down the flight of stairs.

A man with white hair and a long, white beard stood upon the stairs, stooped over. He had the appearance of a man bending down over some object. Evidently the flashing of the light had not disturbed him.

Keeneyes held the dark lantern in his hand. He threw its beams full upon the old man. Judge Havens started, for he recognized the midnight intruder as the tenant of the house next door—Thomas Overstreet.

The old man started up and his face was upon them. His wide, glassy eyes seemed to fix them with an icy stare. Jack Allen shivered.

But the old man was in a trance, and knew nothing of the present. He was living over the night of the murder, forty years ago.

He did not linger long. Soon he turned about and passed swiftly down the stairs. Keeneyes hurried after the ghostly form, and Havens and Allen kept close behind the detective.

Thomas Overstreet went into the back room, straight for the cellar door which stood open. Keeneyes looked swiftly about for Jansen Moore and was pleased to find that his friend was not in the room. Evidently Moore had obeyed instructions; probably he was now crouching in the drainpipe, waiting for the signal word to pull the rope.

The unconscious old man reached the cellar door and paused. He turned about his unseeing face as if listening. It was now that Keeneyes changed his purpose. He had made provision for every contingency, but it was not necessary to wait till the old man was entrapped in the cellar. It would not be necessary for Jack Allen to lock the door. The irresolute attitude of the sleeping man gave them the opportunity to capture him without difficulty.

Keeneyes accordingly held his dark lantern above his head, and drawing his pistol said in a sharp voice, "Thomas Overstreet!"

The old man was rudely shocked out of his somnambulistic state. He leaped straight in the air and grasped his head in convulsive hands.

But Judge Havens and Jack Allen had been no less startled by the unexpected breaking of the stillness. With nerves already wrought to tightest tension, the sharp, quick voice of the detective caused them to start back violently.

Judge Havens jumped as if he had received an electric shock. His feet struck one of the uprights that had been left over from the wooden framework used to frighten old Dave. Jansen Moore had left it leaning against the wall in a position none too secure. It fell forward, and the upper end smashed into the dark lantern, knocking it out of the detective's hand and breaking the glass.

The light was extinguished.

The heavy timber fell to the bare floor with a thud and a startling echo.

From the position of the cellar door came a frightful cry.

In the rear was to be heard the sound of fleeing feet.

"Merciful Heavens!" came an ejaculation from Judge Havens.

The cellar door closed with a bang.

"He is in the cellar!" exclaimed Keeneyes in great excitement. "Come, Judge! Allen, lock us in!"

"Strike a light," faltered the judge. "I'm not going down there in the darkness."

"Lock me in," called the detective, who was already at the door; "do you hear, Allen?"

There was no answer.

"I think he has run away," faltered the judge.

Keeneyes desperately struck a match and looked down into the cellar, thus presenting himself as a possible mark for any unfriendly marksman. He did not stand thus but a moment.

Then he turned back into the room where Judge Havens was standing in painful uncertainty. The lighted match showed them that Jack Allen was indeed gone. It was his bare feet they had heard scampering off in the rear.

"Look out for this broken glass," said Keeneyes quietly as he picked up his smashed lantern and lit it.

"What are you going to do?" the judge asked; "did he get away?"

"That remains to be seen," said Keeneyes leisurely. "There is an inverted barrel in the cellar under which he may be hiding. Otherwise he has made his escape through the drainpipe."

"But why don't you call to Mr. Moore to pull his rope and stop up the drainpipe?"

"It is unnecessary," said Keeneyes, "for he has already done so."

"Without waiting for you to call 'Gludgers?'"

"So it would appear. Will you descend, Judge?"

"Yes—as long as there is a light."

"I think I hear Mr. Allen rallying," remarked Keeneyes, serenely, "but we will not wait for him."

He went down the cellar stairs, followed by Judge Havens. They cautiously drew near the barrel. Keeneyes gave it a sudden shove. It fell over upon its side. It was empty.

"No," said Keeneyes, glancing toward the drainpipe which was effectually stopped up by the enormous weight of the old iron, "our murderer has really eluded us."

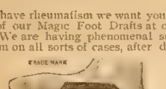
Judge Havens stared blankly at the detective. Keeneyes seated himself upon the barrel and gently rocked himself to and fro.

Suddenly a click was heard from above. The judge started.

"Ah," said Keeneyes with a smile, "your friend has locked us in. This is indeed interesting. We are prisoners, Judge Havens."

At that moment a cry came from above, which sounded something like words that

(Continued on page fourteen.)



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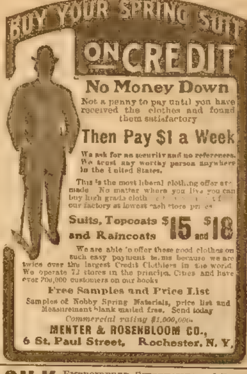
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CHAPTER XXII.

DOLAN AND WHITESIDE APPEAR AGAIN.

Mr. Gates was sent for at once, and when he came up to the mine he was told that Dolan and Whiteside had been there, claiming that they owned ten of the fifteen claims, through having purchased them from a man named Skupple, who held a certificate of entry from the register at Fair Play.

"You saw the certificate, of course?" remarked Mr. Gates.

"Yes, sir; it seemed all straight. But, they will be here in a little while, and you can look at it yourself."

"Skupple may have entered the claims, all right," said Mr. Gates, "but he did not do the necessary assessment work, as is required by the laws of Colorado, and that will make the certificate of entry valueless, I feel certain."

"I never thought of that!" exclaimed "There had been no work done here, that is certain, so we are all right!"

"I think so. But, of course, rather than have any trouble, we will pay Dolan and Whiteside a fair sum for the certificate."

"We won't pay them two hundred thousand dollars, though?" with a whimsical smile.

"Hardly! No, we will offer them one hundred dollars apiece, and if they won't accept that, we will tell them that they'll have to be satisfied with nothing."

"They will make a fight, they said."

"Let them. Little good it will do them."

"Yas, let 'em fight, ef they wanter," said Hank, he and Mark being present.

"They're comin' now, I guess," said Mark. "I heer footsteps."

"Shall I do the talking?" queried Mr. Gates.

"Yes, indeed!" said Roy, and Hank and Mark nodded.

Then there came a knock on the door, and Mr. Gates called out:

"Come in!"

The door opened and in came Dolan and Whiteside. When they saw Mr. Gates they nodded and looked somewhat sheepish, but soon put on a bold front.

"Sit down," said Mr. Gates curtly.

The two did so.

"Let me see that certificate," and Mr. Gates held out his hand.

Dolan drew a dirty, faded piece of paper from his pocket and handed it to the speaker.

Mr. Gates unfolded the paper and looked at it carefully.

"It seems to be all regular and genuine," he said.

"Oh, yas, et's reg'lar."

"Why didn't Skupple work the mine?"

"He didn't know thar wuz mica heer. He wuz arter gol', an' jest entered ther claims on er guess thet thar mought be gol' heer. Then he heerd uv some rich strikes over ther range an' went thar, an' then up inter Montanny, an' never got back till erbout er month ergo."

"I see; then he never did any assessment work on these claims"

Dolan and Whiteside exchanged glances and fidgeted uneasily.

"I guess he did," Dolan said.

"No, he did not. You know he didn't!"

"He—wal, et don' make no difference He hez er legal claim ter them claims, an'——"

"The laws of the State expressly provide that one hundred dollars' worth of work must be done on each claim, once each year for five years, Dolan; and as Skupple did not do any assessment work, his claim to the claims is invalidated, and that certificate is not worth the paper it is written on; but, in order that there may be no shadow of anything against our title, we will pay you one hundred dollars apiece if you will transfer this certificate to our company and give up all claim to the claims herein mentioned."

The two laughed harshly and sneeringly.

"Er hundred dollars apiece—bah!" cried Dolan. "We won' do et! Not much! Make et fifty thousan' dollars apiece, an' we'll talk ter ye."

"Thet's right; not er cent less'n fifty thousan'!" coincided Whiteside.

"Bah! You are fools, or else you think we are," said Mr. Gates. "You have no legal claim to these claims, and you will accept the hundred dollars apiece or you will get nothing. Take your choice."

"An' ye jest listen ter me!" cried Dolan. "We hev er claim on ten uv ther fifteen claims heer an' we're goin' ter hev at least fifty thousan' dollars apiece out uv this comp'ny, er else we'll take possession uv ther mine, thet's whut!"

"Ye bet we will!" nodded Whiteside.

Mr. Gates laughed scornfully.

"How do you purpose taking possession of the mine?" he queried. "By legal process?"

"No, by force!"

"Ye bet!" from Whiteside.

"Ah, indeed? Well, Dolan, let me tell you something: If you try anything like that you will get—a pine box, two by six feet in size, nothing more."

"Somebuddy else'll git er pine box, too, ye bet!" growled Dolan.

"Where will you get your men?" queried Mr. Gates.

"I'll git 'em, all right, don' ye worry!" with a leer.

Then they took their departure without more words.

"Do you think they will try to make us any trouble, Mr. Gates?" queried Roy.

"No, I don't, Roy, but it won't do any harm to be on your guard for a while."

Then Mr. Gates went back to Richton to look after his gold mine. He did not think that Dolan and Whiteside would be heard from again.

But he was mistaken, for that night about ten o'clock a party consisting of about twenty men, headed by Captain Jericho, the road agent, and Bill Dolan and Jim Whiteside, suddenly appeared at the mine and made prisoners of Roy, Hank and Mark, and forced the miners to leave the mine, under penalty of being shot, if they refused to do so or showed fight.

"Now we've got this heer mine," chuckled Bill Dolan, "an' we're goin' ter keep et, ye bet! Possession is nine p'ints, an' we've got possession!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE SIEGE AT THE MINE.

One of the miners who had been forced to leave the mine went at once to Richton and notified Mr. Gates of the capture of the mine. He was amazed and angered by the news.

"Well, who would have thought that they would attempt any such high-handed piece of work as that!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, they're desperate men," said the miner, "an' thet Captain Jericho ain't afeered uv nothin', ye know."

"Well, we will attend to his case tomorrow," said Mr. Gates. "We will take the mine away from them, or kill the last one of them!"

"But they hev got Roy an' Hank an' Mark in theer power," said the miner, "an' ef we attackt them they may put the three ter death."

"I hardly think they would dare do that."

The miner shook his head.

"Ye kain't tell whut them skoun'rels mought do," he said.

"True; well, we'll have to meet that issue when it is forced upon us."

Next morning Mr. Gates set out for Micaville—as the place was called—and took all his miners along. There were thirty of them, all armed with Winchesters and revolvers.

In Micaville he secured the services of twenty more men, by agreement to pay them ten dollars a day to fight against the desperadoes who had seized the mine.

Then, with his little army, he marched up to the mine.

The desperadoes had seen them coming, and had retreated into the mine, barricading the entrance with stones, behind which they crouched, weapons in hand.

Mr. Gates advanced, with a white handkerchief held up, to signify that he wished to parley.

Bill Dolan came forth to meet him.

"Wal, whut d'ye want?" the rascal queried, leering.

"I want you and your gang to evacuate," was the reply.

"I s'pose ye mean thet ye want us ter git out?"

"That's it, exactly"

"Wal, ye'll hev ter jest keep on wantin'," insolently.

"You won't do it, eh?"

"Not on yer life!"

Mr. Gates half turned and waved his hand toward his little army of men.

"Look there," he said.

"I see 'em."

"There are fifty men there."

"Yas?"

"Yes! And you have not more than twenty."

"Mebby not, but, ye see, we're in possession uv ther mine, an' hev got er barricade, an' we kin hol' out erg'in twice ez menny men ez whut ye've got."

"You are a fool, Dolan. You can't do anything of the kind."

"We'll show ye!" with a leer.

"Then you refuse to come out and give up this foolish piece of business?"

Dolan nodded vigorously.

"Ye bet!" he said.

"Your blood will be on your own heads!" warningly.

"Yas, an' er lot uv yer blood will be on your own heads, too!" with a grin.

"See here, Dolan, let me tell you something."

"Go erhead."

"You are in the mine there; are in possession, true, but you have no provisions in there, and we can starve you out in a day or two, so what is the use of making a fight?"

"Ef ye starve us out ye'll starve out Roy Wells an' Hank Rogers an' Mark Morgan, understan'!" grinned Dolan.

"If you harm a hair of their heads we will kill the last one of your gang!" declared Gates sternly.

"We'll riddle 'em with bullets unless ye go erway an' leave us erlone!" declared Dolan.

"If you harm them no mercy will be shown any of you!" cried Mr. Gates. "So beware! Treat them kindly, if you know when you are well off!"

"Bah! We hain't afeerd uv ye!"

"Perhaps not, but you know me, Dolan, and you know that when I say a thing I mean it."

Dolan gave utterance to an inarticulate exclamation and turned and strode back to the mine, and entered.

Mr. Gates returned to where his men stood.

"Air they goin' ter come out?" queried one eagerly.

"No, I think they will stick, a while, at least."

"An' air we goin' ter go fur 'em right erway?" from another.

Mr. Gates shook his head.

"No," he said; "they are protected by that barricade, and they would be able to kill a number of us. I think the best thing to do is to take up our position in such a manner that they cannot leave the mine without our seeing them, and then starve them out."

"Mebby thet's bes'," agreed the miner who had first spoken.

This plan was put into effect. The besieging army stretched itself from the cliff, on the left of the entrance to the mine, around to the cliff again, on the right of the entrance. The men concealed themselves behind rocks and trees, so as to not afford a target for the desperadoes in the mine.

In this manner that day wore away and night settled over all.

The night passed quietly and next morning the siege was continued.

About noon Dolan again appeared, carrying a white handkerchief, and Mr. Gates advanced to meet him.

"Well?" he queried, as he paused in front of the desperado.

"I've come ter tell ye thet 'nless ye go erway within ther hour an' leave us erlone, we'll shoot ther three pris'ners full uv holes an' throw ther carkasses out ter ye!" snarled Dolan.

Mr. Gates' face darkened, and he eyed the desperado sternly.

"See here, Dolan," he said, almost fiercely, "you can't run any bluff on me! We are not going to raise the siege, not a bit of it. And if you harm a hair of the prisoners, not one of your gang shall escape! We will show you no quarter, but will kill the last one of you! Do you understand?"

"Bah! Ye kain't skeer me!"

"I'm not trying to scare you. I am telling you a plain truth, that is all! If you harm the prisoners, not one of your gang shall live to see another sunrise!"

It was evident that Dolan was impressed, though he tried to look as if he were not. He shuffled uneasily from one foot to the other, and presently he said.

"How much will ye giv' me ef I'll giv' up ther certifercate uv entry ter ther ten claims an' all uv us go erway an' leeve ye in possession, like ye wuz afore?"

"I'll give you the two hundred dollars, the same as I offered to do before."

"Bah! Thet's nothin' ertall!"

"It's all you'll ever get, and is more than you ought to have."

"But we paid Skupple more'n thet fur ther certifercate."

"I don't believe it. I don't believe that you paid him a cent, but that he let you have the certificate, and you are to give him a share of what you get through its use."

Dolan flushed up, and it was plain that Mr. Gates had hit the mark.

"'Tain't so!" he growled.

"That's all right; it doesn't matter, anyway. Do you accept my offer of two hundred dollars?"

"No, I don't!"

"All right, suit yourself, but this is the

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last chance you will have to get even that amount."

"Ef I kain't git more'n thet, I don' want ennythin'!" growled Dolan, and then he turned and strode back toward the entrance to the mine.

"Don't forget what I have told you, Dolan!" called Mr. Gates warningly.

There was no reply.

Dolan clambered to the top of the barricade and disappeared from view, and a few minutes later several pistol-shots were heard from within the mine.

"They hev shot ther pris'ners!" cried one of the miners aghast.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE MINE IN ITS RIGHTFUL OWNERS' HANDS AGAIN.

"If they have!" grated Mr. Gates, "we will——"

At this moment a dark-faced man appeared at the entrance to the mine.

"Et's Cap'n Jericho!" cried one of the miners.

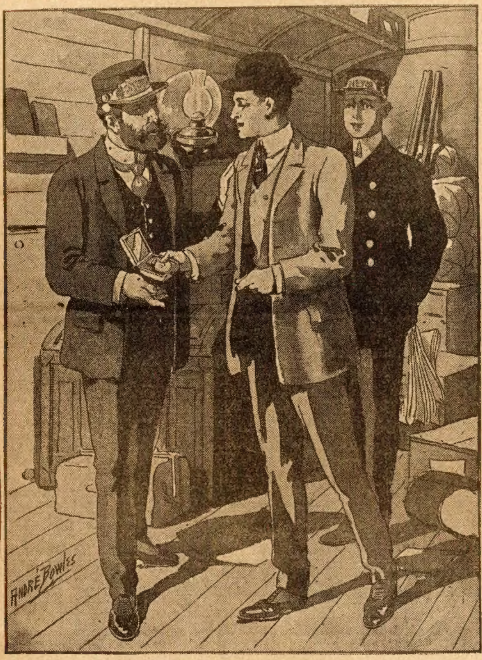
The miner was right; it was Captain Jericho, and he advanced, bearing a white handkerchief as a flag of truce.

Mr. Gates advanced and met him halfway.

"What do you want?" he queried. "Did you shoot the prisoners?"

There was a grim, threatening intonation to his voice as he asked the last query.

"No," replied Captain Jericho, "we didn't shoot the prisoners. I had a few words with Dolan, and we, and some of my men and two or three of his, exchanged shots. Dolan is lying here, incapable of bothering you or any one else any more." This was said coolly, and Mr. Gates asked with interest:



"It's from the Express Company."

"What was the trouble?"

"I wanted that we should capitulate and evacuate the mine and leave here, and Dolan did not want to do so. He wanted to hold onto the mine. He grew angry, and we had recourse to weapons. The matter is settled, and now I am ready to make terms with you."

"What kind of terms do you wish to make?"

"I want that myself and men shall be permitted to leave here unmolested. This kind of work is out of my line, anyway. We have three of your friends in there, prisoners, and could put them to death, if we so desired, but if you will agree to let us leave the mine unmolested I will agree that they shall not be injured."

"You are ready to give up the fight for the mine, then?"

"Yes; as I said, that sort of thing is out of my line, and I don't see why I was such a fool to go into it in the first place."

"Do you speak for all who are in there—Dolan's men as well as your own?"

"Yes; Dolan is dead and Whiteside is wounded, so I am in command of all in there."

"Very good. Leave the mine at once, taking Dolan's body and Whiteside with you and leaving the prisoners behind, and you shall not be harmed."

"Good enough! We will be away in a jiffy—and you may be sure that I shall not undertake any more such work as this. I shall confine my efforts to the line with which I am familiar."

"Better quit it, and turn to an honest life. If you don't, you will wind up at the end of a rope one of these days."

"I'll risk it. Well, so long."

Mr. Gates nodded, and Captain Jericho returned to the mine. He was out of sight only a few minutes, and then some of his men tore the rocks away from the entrance of the mine, and the desperadoes came forth. Two of their number were supporting a wounded man, and four were carrying a dead body—that of Dolan.

Mr. Gates stepped forward and addressed Captain Jericho:

"There is a document in his pocket," he said, "a certificate of entry of some claim. I would like to have it."

"All right, you are welcome to it," said Captain Jericho. Help yourself."

Mr. Gates felt in the pockets of the dead man, and drew forth the certificate, to which he at once applied a match, and it was quickly consumed.

"Now you may go," he said.

And Captain Jericho and his gang of desperadoes went.

Then Mr. Gates and a number of the miners hastened into the mine and cut the bonds of the three prisoners, Roy, Hank and Mark, freeing them.

They said that they had not been ill-treated, but they had not had anything to eat since they were made prisoners and were nearly starved.

They were given food, and in the meantime Mr. Gates had paid off the twenty men that he had hired to help his miners, and had sent his own miners back to Richton, and had put the mica miners to work again.

Soon everything was running as smoothly as had been the case before the appearance of the outlaws, and no further trouble from that source was apprehended.

"Dolan is dead, Whiteside is wounded, and the certificate is not in existence, so there will be no further trouble from that quarter," said Mr. Gates.

"I judge that you are right, sir," agreed Roy.

Roy wrote to his mother and sister in New York frequently, telling them of his wonderful success, and they wrote him pleasing letters in reply. As the holiday season drew near, his mother and sister began insisting that he come home to spend Christmas, and he finally decided to do so.

He went down to Cripple Creek and told May, and said that he would go if she would go with him and remain in New York and make her home with his mother and sister.

"But I am nothing to them, Roy," said May; "they don't even know me, and they might not want me at all."

"But I want you, May!" said Roy earnestly. "I love you, little sweetheart and I am going to make you my wife when I am of age, if you are willing. Are you?"

The girl's eyes drooped, and she blushed like a peony, and then presently she said, almost in a whisper, but in a voice that thrilled Roy through and through:

"Yes, Roy—I'm willing."

"Then we'll go back to New York together!" he cried. "And you shall stay and make your home with my mother and sister, and then when I am twenty-one we will be married!"

"Very well, Roy; it shall be just as you say, dear."

Roy told Mrs. Gates and Harriet what had been decided upon, and they both approved of the plan, and then they congratulated both on their engagement.

"You will be happy, I know," said Mrs. Gates.

"Yes, of course they will, mother!" from Harriet.

"We will miss you, May," went on Mrs. Gates.

"Yes, I shall be lonesome," said Harriet, "but I'm going to come to New York with Roy some time when he is going home on a visit, and spend a few weeks with you, May."

"Months, you mean, Harriet!" cried May, seizing the other in her arms and hugging and kissing her.

A few days later Roy and May boarded the train and went to Canon City where they got aboard the Limited and were soon speeding toward New York.

When the newsboy came through the train Roy was delighted to see that it was his friend Joe Saunders.

Joe did not recognize Roy at first glance, as he was not thinking of such a thing as that his friend might be on the train, and then the fact that there was a girl with Roy threw him off the track also. But when he got a fair look at Roy he gave utterance to an exclamation of amazement and delight:

"Great Jones! if it isn't Roy!"

"Yes," said Roy, laughing, and then he shook hands with Joe, and introduced him, to May.

"I'll come back into the baggage car and have a talk with you presently, Joe," said Roy.

"All right," and with a low bow to May the candy "butcher" went on.

Roy told May all about Joe, and how he (Roy) had come to Colorado in Joe's company without having to pay fare, because he was the newsboy's friend. He told about the fight with the train robbers also, and gave Joe credit for being a very brave youth. And May easily guessed that Roy had proved himself to be just as brave.

Later on Roy went back to the baggage car and had a long talk with Joe, and with Mr. McGowen, the express messenger, for he was still on this run.

"Here is something that I have been keeping for you, Roy," said McGowen, and he took a gold watch out of his desk and handed it to the youth. "It is from the express company, in token of their appreciation of what you did for them when you helped me fight the train robbers off. Joe has one just like it."

It was a fine gold watch, with an inscription on the inside of the front cover, stating why it was given and to whom.

"Please tell them that I thank them very much for the watch," said Roy. "I shall keep it always."

"Very well, Roy."

Joe and McGowen were both delighted to hear that Roy had struck it rich, and congratulated him on his good fortune.

"You certainly are lucky, Roy!" said Joe.

"Yes," agreed Roy, thinking of May as much as of the mica mine; "I am the luckiest boy in the world!"

When Roy went back into the coach where May was, he showed her the watch, and she was delighted.

"That is splendid!" she said. "I am so glad that they gave it to you, Roy!"

When Roy and May reached the youth's home in New York they were given a joyous welcome, indeed; Mrs. Wells and Katie

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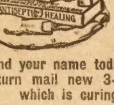

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fell in love with May right away, and made her feel at home from the first moment that she entered the house.

Of course, Roy had to tell the story of his finding of the mica mine, and also his adventures in securing it and holding it, and his mother and sister insisted that he had been wonderfully lucky.

"Yes, I have," he coincided; "I am the luckiest boy in the world, and I have the best mother and sister and sweetheart in the world, too!"

May blushed rosily, and was glad when Katie threw her arms around her neck and hugged and kissed her, as it enabled her to hide her confusion.

Roy had brought home a draft for twenty thousand dollars, and he deposited it in a bank, and then next day took his mother, sister and sweetheart out and they found a pretty place that could be bought for ten thousand dollars, and he purchased it at once, and then they went and bought the furniture necessary to furnish it, and had it sent to the house at once.

One week later they were installed in their new home, and they ate their Christmas dinner there, and it was as happy a little family as there was in all Greater New York that day.

Roy stayed till after New Year's, and then bade good-by to his loved ones and went back to Colorado and his mica mine, which was to make him immensely rich before another year should elapse.

Roy bought a house in Cripple Creek, near the Gates home, and his mother and sister and sweetheart spent the summer there each year till Roy was of age, and then there was a wedding in the Cripple Creek home, as May said she would rather be married there, where the Gates family could be present, than to be married in New York.

It was a happy occasion, and there never was a happier couple than Roy and May.

In addition to the members of the Gates family, Hank Rogers and Mark Morgan were present at the wedding, and they were glad to see Roy so happy, for they liked him immensely and were grateful to him for giving them an interest in the great mica mine, thus making them independent for the rest of their lives.

Roy was worth more than a quarter of a million cash the day he was married and his interest in the great mica mine was valued at more than a million dollars.

He bought a "brown stone front" mansion on Fifth avenue, New York, and the winters were spent there and the summers at the home in Cripple Creek.

Joe Saunders accepted an offer from Roy and came and learned the mining business, and was later on made superintendent in place of Hank Rogers, who said he wanted to quit work and enjoy himself in idleness for awhile. Roy gave Joe a small interest in the mine, as he claimed that he might never have been in a position to reach Colorado and make the "strike" had not Joe "deadheaded" him out there, in the baggage car.

It was never learned who May's parents were, but that they were good people there could be no doubt, for May had all the attributes of a true-hearted, noble woman.

Hank Rogers and Mark Morgan both knocked off working and lived in ease in Cripple Creek.

Captain Jericho's band was broken up about a year after the attempt that had been made to capture the mica mine, and Captain Jericho himself was killed while resisting capture.

Jim Whiteside did not die of his wound, but left the country as soon as he was able to travel.

Mrs. Wells and Katie live with Roy and May, and they dwell together in perfect peace and harmony. But indications are that Katie will not be there always, for Joe Saunders is a frequent caller, and, well—the man that issues marriage licenses would starve to death if young people ceased marrying, you know.

Thus ends the story of Roy Wells' "Million-Dollar 'Strike.'" In truth he had been lucky—so lucky, in fact, that his claim that he was "the luckiest boy in the world" was not at all extravagant or far-fetched.

(The end.)

A Trifling Detail.

"How's Mary Ellen getting on?" asked one of the neighbors, when Mrs. Austin returned from a visit. She fixed a keen gaze on Mrs. Austin, for rumors of Mary Ellen's domestic troubles had reached the village some time before.

"Why, she's got everything fixed up real nice," said Mrs. Austin slowly. "She has a good house and a garden and a cow, and some o' the likliest hens, and a couple o' pigs, and——"

"Is it true that her husband has reg'lar temper tantrums every little while?" persisted the neighbor.

"Well," said Mrs. Austin, "I don't see any need of dwelling on that. When folks have a good deal of live stock some o' the critters is liable to be ailing now and then."

Quieted.

As there was no diner attached to the train the hungry passenger touched the gruff conductor on the arm.

"May I ask you a question?" ventured the passenger.

"If you hurry up about it," snapped the conductor.

"Well, how long does this train stop for dinner?"

"It don't stop at all."

"And why not?"

"Because this train doesn't eat dinner."

And then the gruff conductor strode off with all the pomp of a drum major in a minstrel show.

The Humorous Scientist.

"Here is a scientist who says mankind could soon learn to wag its ears."

"He must be something of a wag himself."

House of the Midnight Sound.

(Continued from page eleven.)

gentlemen ought not to employ.

"Oh," exclaimed Judge Havens, "I am afraid Jack has stepped on some of that glass."

"Yes," said Keeneyes gently, "I do not think he will run away again in so great a hurry. But do you understand what has happened, Judge? I will elucidate:

"Jansen Moore was lying in the drainpipe, waiting for me to shout 'Gludgers.' He hears our murderer running down into the cellar, he hears the banging of the cellar door, the smashing of my lantern, which I owe to you, my dear Judge, and the flying feet of your friend, Mr. Allen. All this naturally excites my friend, Jansen Moore. He hears a sound at the mouth of the tiling. It is the murderer, preparing to escape through his natural exit. The murderer gets into the pipe, head first, no doubt. Moore hears him scraping along the sides and can wait no longer. He pulled the rope. Then what happens? He has closed himself up with our murderer in terribly close quarters. They are in there now, doubtless, face to face. Perhaps a tragedy is in progress, perhaps a comedy. But it will be all the same a hundred years from now. As for you and me, we cannot go to the rescue, thanks to Mr. Allen."

"I will call him to unlock the door," said the judge.

"Do so," said Keeneyes serenely.

"Jack! Jack!" shouted the judge, "let us out of here!"

Keeneyes rocked himself on his barrel.

"You take all this very easily," exclaimed Judge Havens angrily.

"There are always times in my career," said Keeneyes, "when I have to depend upon other people for the success of certain subordinate achievements. At such times I never expect perfect success. I foresaw all this exactly as it has happened. Jansen Moore pulled his rope too soon and Mr. Allen locked the door too late. Here we are. And here we will be until Mr. Allen lets us out."

Judge Havens raised his voice angrily, "Let us out! Let us out!"

"Whatever happens down below in the drainpipe," said Keeneyes, "we know, now by ocular demonstration, who murdered Washington Talbot. The motive for that deed of forty years ago is still to be explained to you. I will elucidate. When Washington Talbot——"

"Let me out! let me out!" yelled the judge fiercely.

"When Washington Talbot was a young man, high-spirited and full of the love of life and the joy of love——"

"Jack's coming," cried Judge Havens, climbing up the cellar stair. "Never mind about Washington Talbot now. I've got a little joy of life myself!"

A voice came from above; "Did you say to unlock the door?"

"You let me out!" snapped Judge Havens.

The door was hastily opened. Jack Allen held a lighted lamp in his hand. "I went after a lamp," he said. "I cut my foot on some miserable glass, trying to find the electric bulb. Oh, there you are," he added, glaring at the dangling cord. "The tracks of my blood are all under you, you—"

"Don't, Jack," said Havens reprovingly. "It is as silly and childish for a man to damn an object that displeases him as for an infant to beat with its tiny fist the hammer that has mashed its finger."

"Thank you, teacher," said Jack. "Are you taking up a collection? Mamma forgot to give me my penny before I started to Sunday school."

"Gentlemen," said Keeneyes briskly, "let us hurry out and examine the other end of that drainpipe. If Jansen Moore's life is in danger we must rescue him; if not, we must capture the murderer. In either case this is scarcely the occasion for homilies."

CHAPTER XVII.

AS IT WAS FORTY YEARS AGO.

"Have you another lantern?" asked Jack Allen.

"No," said Keeneyes, "this broken dark-lantern is the only one on the place."

"There is a breeze blowing," Allen objected, "so there would be use to carry this lamp outdoors."

"Why, my dear fellow," said the detective hurriedly, "we want no light. Come!" Without waiting to see whether or not he was followed, the detective darted out of the back door.

He made it one of his first cares on coming to the haunted house to investigate the extreme end of the drainpipe. After leaving the cellar floor it extended about five feet below the surface of the ground to the end of the back yard. Here it emptied into a ravine which at present was dry.

Keeneyes ran lightly toward the ravine. He was followed more heavily by Judge Havens and Jack Allen.

The night was dark, but a dim starlight rendered the masses of the trees and the long, straggling outlines of the grape-arbor dimly visible.

"S-s-sh!" cautioned the detective as Allen tripped over the ill-kept vines and rolled to the ground, "this is the place."

Allen cautiously extricated himself from the vines, softly murmuring to himself.

Keeneyes called cautiously, "Jansen Moore!"

"Yes," came a voice from the bottom of the ravine.

"Are you hurt?"

"I don't think I am—much," Moore hesitated.

"Come up," said Keeneyes. "Where is our murderer?"

"He got away."

"And you couldn't, hey?" said Keeneyes cheerfully. "Well, well, what made you pull that rope? I told you not to pull it until you heard me cry 'Gludgers.' As I never cried 'Gludgers' you could not have heard the signal. And yet you pulled the rope!"

"I had to pull it," said Moore in self-justification.

"Indeed? But why?"

"The first thing I knew," returned Jansen Moore, "the fugitive was crawling into the pipe right where I was lying in wait. I was excited. I thought you fellows were going to nab him in the cellar. I wasn't expecting to get into such close quarters with him. I didn't know what to do. So I pulled the rope and I got out of that drain as quick as I could, and rolled to the bottom of the ravine."

"I suppose the murderer came after you?"

"Yes, he got out almost as soon as I did, but he knew the way better, so he didn't fall. He took out across the alley and I just let him go. I was stunned and bewildered."

"But what good did it do to pull the rope?"

"Well," returned Moore, "what good would it have done not to pull it?"

"This good," said the detective; "had you stood your ground I would have dived into the tiling and had out our murderer by his legs. As it was, you pulled all that iron down and shut us off from following."

"That's right," said Jansen Moore. "I hadn't thought of that."

"Well, well," Judge Havens interposed impatiently, "what is to be done?"

"Let us all sit down upon this nice ravine bank," said the detective, "and I will explain the cause of that murder of forty years ago."

"I do not think this is the time—" Allen began.

"Yes, it is," Keeneyes assured him. "It will do capitally.

"He may slip upon us while we are talking."

"Not he. He has gone home. We will go for him presently. Let us, then, project ourselves into the past forty years. Did you gentlemen ever read 'A Yankee at King Arthur's Court?'"

"I don't read about Yankees," said the judge dryly.

"And I'm not interested in royalty," said Allen.

"Anyway," continued Keeneyes, "we can imagine ourselves back into the past. Living in this little Kentucky town are two young men, Thomas Overstreet and Washington Talbot. I will make the story brief for I perceive you are restive.

"Thomas Overstreet had a sister, presumably beautiful, at any rate attractive in the eyes of Washington Talbot. Then transpired one of those social tragedies which occasionally stain the annals of high life. Let us not particularize or retouch that faded picture. It is sufficient to say that although there was a marriage, Thomas Overstreet swore in his heart to avenge the wrong done his sister. Opportunely, the war came on. Washington Talbot fled to it as a means of escape from unpleasant conditions at home, rather than from patriotic sentiments.

"When he came home his wife was dead. Her heart had been broken.

"The wreck of her fair career, the cause of her death were to be charged to Washington Talbot. Her brother charged it to him; and if I may be allowed a playful little metaphor in connection with so grave a matter, allow me to add that not only did he charge Washington Talbot with his sister's death, but he went to collect the bill. In plain English, gentlemen—for I want you to know what I mean—he killed Talbot on his own staircase."

"And he did exactly right!" cried Judge Havens. "No jury in Kentucky would condemn him for so honorable an action."

"Exactly," said Keeneyes. "Nevertheless, it is a serious matter to have a human life upon your hands. Overstreet has lived much alone; he has brooded constantly over the past; and he is now old and lacking that resolution that so many old people cast overboard when they put out to sea."

"We will go to him," cried the judge, "and tell him that we know all; and his heart will be unburdened from his dark secret. It will brighten his last days."

"Come, then," said Keeneyes. "He has doubtless fled to his own house. He knows we saw him in the old Talbot house, but he may hope to explain his presence there by some likely story; or, better, he may have made up his mind to a full confession."

The four men emerged into the alley and entered Thomas Overstreet's premises by the back way.

When they reached the house they found a side door standing wide open.

No light issued from the interior.

"Let us be cautious," whispered Jack Allen.

"Nonsense," retorted Keeneyes, walking boldly but noiselessly into what proved to be a side hall leading to the main corridor.

He struck a match and looked swiftly about. A chair was overturned near the joining of the hallways. The detective was looking for the light fixtures. The next minute the apartment was flooded with electric light.

Keeneyes led the way into the main hall.

At the foot of the broad staircase he uttered a soft exclamation.

A human body lay across the stairs about half-way to the top. Two rigid hands grasped the uprights of the balusters. The gray beard was turned upward, the mouth wide open.

It was Thomas Overstreet.

Keeneyes ran up and examined the rigid form.

"Dead!" he called to the men in the hall, "heart failure!"

(The end.)

No Room for Doubt.

Swiggs—There's one thing I admire about my wife. She always believes my excuses for failing to get home early.

Briggs—Indeed! What do you tell her?

Swiggs—I tell her that I was busy downtown getting drunk.

From Child Land.

"Now, Mabel," said her mother one morning, "do you think you can remember to speak kindly to little brother while mamma goes out shopping?"

"Yes'm," replied 5-year-old Mabel.

"And if you don't say a single cross word to him while I'm gone I'll bring home a whole box of candy for you."

Mabel solemnly promised. Two hours later mamma returned to find little brother serenely sleeping and small Mabel waiting to claim her reward. After she had given it to her mamma again remarked:

"And so my little daughter didn't say a cross word to brother?"

"No, not a single one, mamma, not even when he poked the sawdust from my doll."

"You didn't, dear?"

"No'm, I didn't say a word. I just took my little chair and knocked him over the head with it."

A little 5-year-old was sent to the butcher shop. "Please, sir, mother wants two cents' worth of liver for the cat. Not so fat, as the last time. It made father sick."

The Sunday school teacher of an infant class was instructing her pupils in the mysteries of the Trinity. One small bit of humanity was exceedingly puzzled by the subject and the teacher, trying to make it clear to him, asked little Jamie if he had three of any particular article with him. Jamie promptly extracted three buttons from his pocket and handed them to his instructress, and she laid them one by one in his chubby palm, saying:

"Let this one be the Father, this one the Son and this one the Holy Ghost. Bring them back next Sunday so I may see if you remember their meaning."

Upon being questioned as to the Trinity the following Sabbath Jamie pulled forth a button, saying: "This is the Father," then another, "and this is the Son," and after a thorough search in all his pockets for the third, exclaimed:

"O, ma sewed the Holy Ghost on my trousers this morning!"

My nephew, aged 2½ years, while out walking fell on the stone sidewalk. Gravely picking himself up, he turned, looked down a moment, and said: "'Scuse yourself, sidewalk."

Margaret was 4 years old and her brother, John, 5½. Mother had always insisted that they wear their rubbers when outdoors, and they disliked them much. Recently John's mother bought him a new pair of heavy boys' shoes and told him that he need not wear his rubbers any more.

John was overjoyed, of course, and also gloated over the fact that Margaret had to continue wearing them, while he could go without.

That night when they were getting ready for bed John looked over to Margaret and said:

"I know dess free persons what don't have to wear rubbers." No answer from Margaret, and again John said: "I know dess free persons what don't have to wear rubbers."

Margaret could stand it no longer, and said, "Well, who?" and John said, "Me, Roosevelt and God.'

A little girl of 3 years was given a bag of peanuts by her father. She helped herself to one and being unable to break the shell, she said: "Papa, will you please unbutton this peanut for me?"

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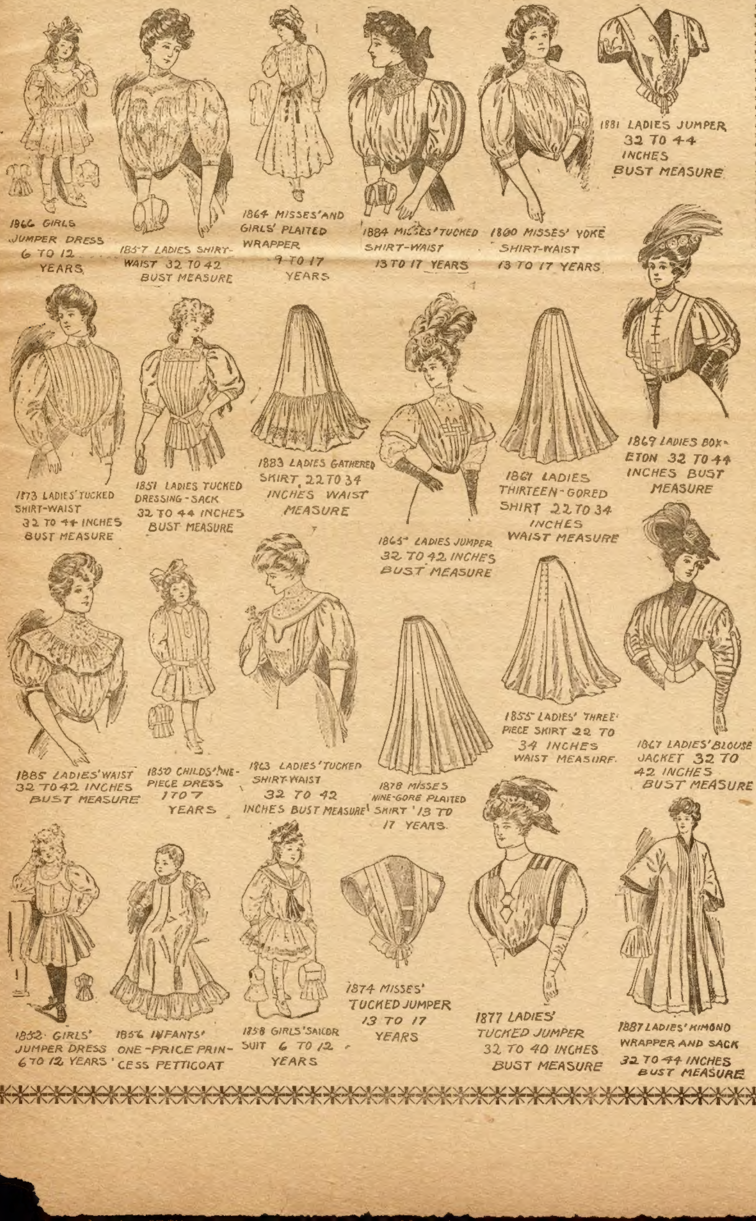

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When a feller goes to school all day,
An' gits home late and wants to play,
Then Pa or Ma is sure to say,
"Go git the kindlin' in."

A feller's always hungry, too,
When he gits home, an' I tell you
He feels too weak an' limp clear through
To git the kindlin' in.

En if you just don't go right straight,
But put it off, an' kinder wait,
First thing you know it's gittin' late
To git the kindlin' in.

An' some nights when you clean forget,
An git to bed, it makes you sweat
To hear Pa call—'n you jump, you bet,
To git the kindlin' in.

Our woodshed's dark as pitch at night,
An' Pa won't let you take a light,
Because he said you didn't do right,
An' git the kindlin' in.

An' when you hear the leastest sound
It makes you 'fraid, an' you look round,
An' grab the hatchet an' 'gin to pound,
To git the kindlin' in.

An' way off in the worstest darks
There's something shines like two bright sparks,
An' scares you, till your doggie barks,
'S you git the kindlin' in.

An' Saturday's bad as it can be,
'Cause that's a playtime, don't you see?
But all day long they worry me
To git the kindlin' in.

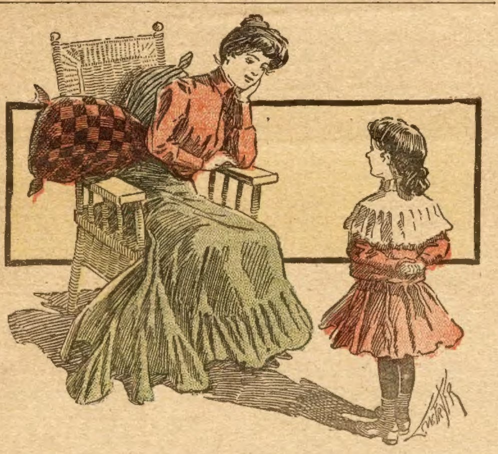
An' when us fellers have a show,
An' I'm the manager, you know,
How can I tell them I must go
An' git the kindlin' in?

The manager just must be there,
To make the boys play straight an' fair—
When I'm the clown, then I don't care
Who gits the kindlin' in.

I wish't we lived where it was hot;
I'd like that fine, I tell you what—
Folks wouldn't care when I forgot
To git the kindlin' in.

A Toy Watch.

It was a hot afternoon in August, so hot that most of the children were kept indoors; but in some way Babe Sweet and James Holton managed to be out. It is probable that they had slipped out of the large hotel, unobserved by their nurses.



Mamma—I saw a little boy speak to you in church. I hope my little girl had more manners than to talk back.

Elsie—Oh, yes, ma, of course I had. I just stuck out my tongue at him.

At any rate, they were having a glorious time playing in the sand on the shore.

James remarked that the sand was lots finer in front of the hotel.

Babe peeped out from behind the boathouse and answered: "I'd rather play here."

"Yes, so would I," answered the boy.

Whether it was because the boathouse afforded shade, or because they didn't want the other children to join them, it is hard to tell, but probably the true reason was that the boathouse sheltered them from the hotel, and so from their mothers' and their nurses' eyes.

On the day our story opens arose their first dispute. After they had played together for several hours beside the boathouse, they wandered down nearer the water. They were busy playing, and did not notice the rising tide, until Babe jumped up and said: "Why, my dress is wet." She put her hand into her pocket for her handkerchief; as she pulled it out a string of beads fell into the water. They were immediately washed about two yards from shore, where they caught on some seaweed.

"Oh, my beads!" exclaimed Babe; "get them for me, James."

"What are they good for?" asked the boy.

"Oh, they are Dolly's necklace," answered Babe.

"Well, it won't hurt her to lose them," he replied.

"Oh, James, won't you get them?" begged Babe. "I will give you anything you want if you will only get them."

"The only thing I want is a watch and chain, and you won't get that," he answered.

For an instant Babe's face was clouded; then it brightened and she said: "I will give you a watch and chain if you will only get my beads."

"Honest?" he demanded.

"Yes, honest truly," she said.

The beads were soon restored to their owner, Babe's tears dried, and she was happy again.

In a few minutes Mr. Holton came after the children. He said: "They have been hunting everywhere for you."

James did not seem to mind the scolding he received on account of the wet shoes, for the thought of the watch and chain was topmost in his mind.

"Now, don't forget, Babe," were his parting words.

"I will give it to you at tea," she replied.

When James went down to tea he found a little box under his plate. He did not want his folks to see it, so he stuck it into his pocket. After supper he hurried off by himself to have a peep at his new treasure. When he opened the box he found a little tin watch and chain. His eager face clouded, for he had expected a real watch. He said he would take it right back to Babe, but something made him change his mind, and instead he put it in his pocket, and said: "It is just like a girl."

The icicles have formed their crystals and the buttercups have bloomed a score of times since then.

Two men in uniform were standing on the porch of a hospital. The taller and darker one asked his companion how Captain Holton was.

"Well," replied the companion, "the doctor says he will live, but it was a narrow escape. The bullet caught in a little tin watch he had in his vest pocket."

Two weeks afterward a merry crowd of soldiers were gathered around the bedside of Captain Holton, to hear the story of the little tin watch, which the reader already knows.

"Yes, at first I thought the watch worthless, but I didn't want to hurt the girl's feelings, so I kept it. As I grew older the watch grew dearer to me; when I entered the army I carried it with me. At times I thought I was foolish; still I wouldn't part with it. Two weeks ago it saved my life, so it is even dearer than before."

Grandma's "Moroccos."

Grandmother was showing the girls, Lena, Jennie and Edna, how to "sugar off." They had five rock maples tapped up in the pasture. The snow was deep, but they brought the sap down over the hard crust in pails. Pretty hard work, but they wanted to make some little sugar cakes to nibble through the spring.

So grandma was helping them to cleanse the sirup with a little new milk, boil it down thick, then stir it till it "grained" into sugar, with the girls all the time "tasting" with whittled sticks until grandma said there wouldn't be enough left to make a "sheepskin."

"When I was a little girl," said grandma, stirring the sirup briskly to keep it from running over, "my brother 'Lisher made sugar one spring at the halves for Uncle Enoch. His farm joined ours, and the pasture where the maples grew wasn't more than half a mile off. 'Lisher promised, if I would help him, to get me a pair of morocco shoes.

"That was the height of happiness. None of the girls in our neighborhood had anything better than stout calfskin shoes, made by the neighborhood cobbler; and that was what I always had.

"It was a beautiful spring, freezing hard crusts at night and thawing days. Uncle Enoch had a little camp, with a stone arch inside for boiling sap. I used to help 'Lisher empty the sap troughs, bring the warm dinners from home and tend the fire when he was busy.

"We got along splendid, till one night after we had been sapping about two weeks. 'Lisher had gone home as usual, to do the chores, and after building up a bright fire under the great kettle, for it always got real dark before he could get back, I shut the camp door—it was a shaky old door, with a great crack up and down it that you could run your hand through—and sat down before it, cracking acorns and thinking of my new shoes.

"I hadn't set there very long when I heard a great tramping on the snow outside. I thought sure it was 'Lisher and jumped up to open the door, for I was dreadfully hungry waiting for the supper of bread and sausages that mother used to send me.

"Just then away went the steps around the camp—crunch—crunch—crunch—crunch! in the crust. My heart flew into my mouth! That wasn't 'Lisher! He had on snowshoes and couldn't run! What could it be?

"In a minute back came the tramping—crunch—crunch—crunch! Now down to the ash heap, now out to the sap barrels and I could hear them rolling over and over on the crust, then back to the camp.

"O, dear! It was coming nearer—nearer! Now it ran along under the little window, now it got to the door.

"Snuff—snuff—snuff! went a great black nose up and down that wide crack. I could see it, and the creature pressed so hard against the rickety door that it bulged in and I was afraid the wobbly old button would fly off every minute.

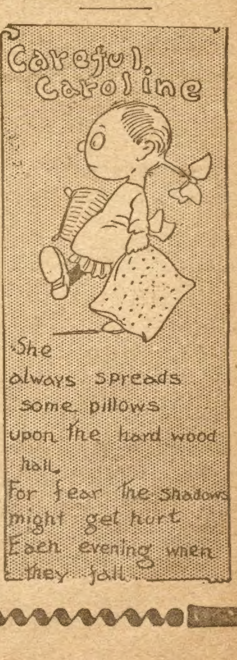
"There was no doubt in my mind now. 'Twas a bear! and I just scooted under mother's great washtub that 'Lisher had to keep sap in and let it drop down over me.

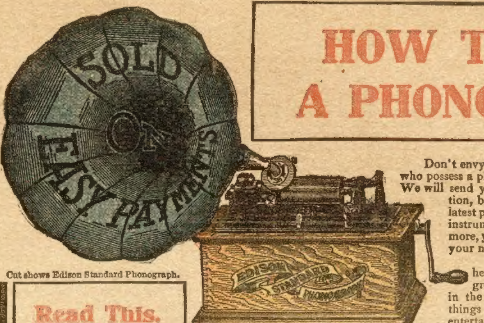
"The next minute the button did fly off, and presently heavy feet scurried over the creaky floor, then the same great nose went smelling around the tub.

"That set me off, and I screamed and beat on the tub with all my might.

"'Whoosh! whoosh!' Mr. Bear wasn't prepared for such a racket, and off he shuffled into the woods still hooting.

"When 'Lisher came he dragged me out, half dead with fright and suffocation. I wouldn't stay any more nights, but I got my moroccos, for 'Lisher said it was worth a pair of shoes to be scared so."


Careful, Caroline
She always spreads some pillows upon the hard wood hall,
For fear the shadows might get hurt
Each evening when they fall.



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